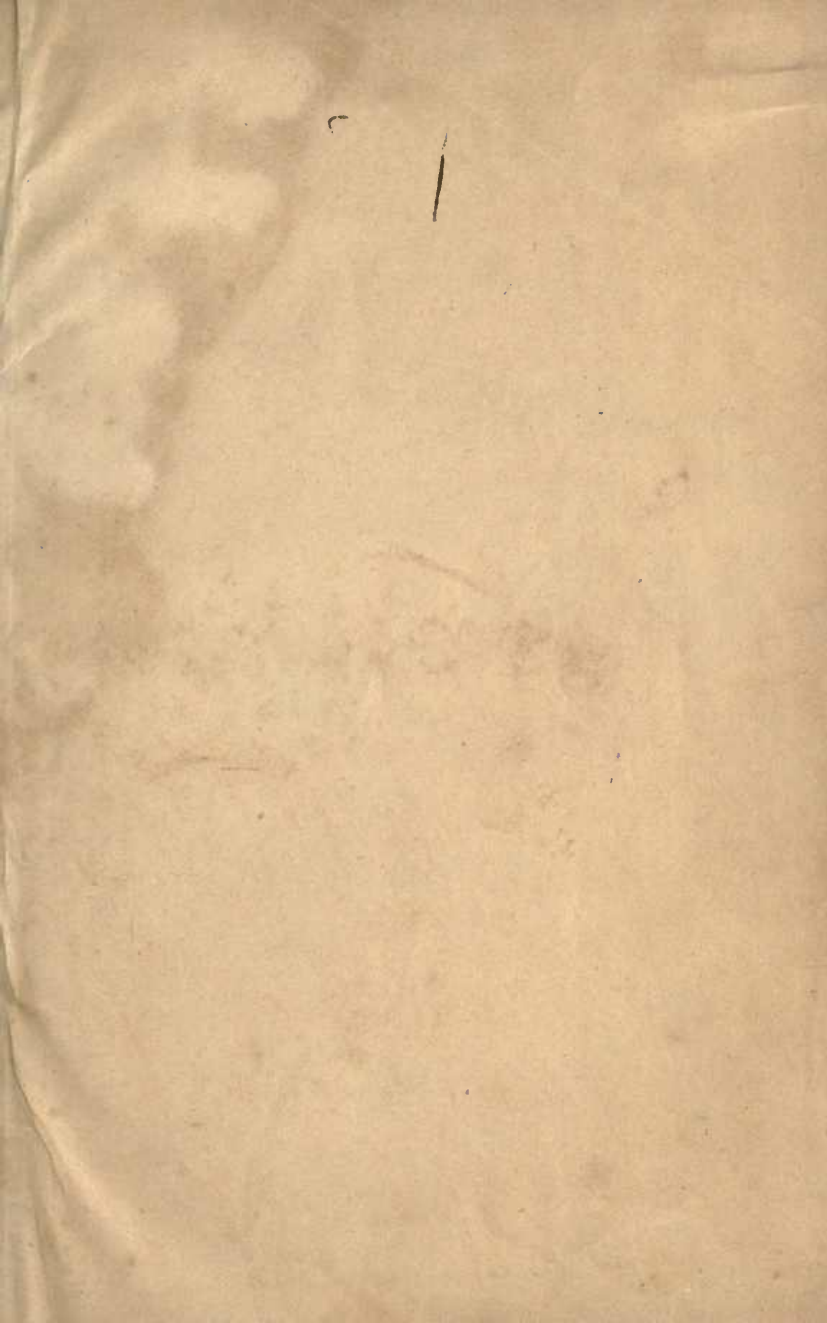
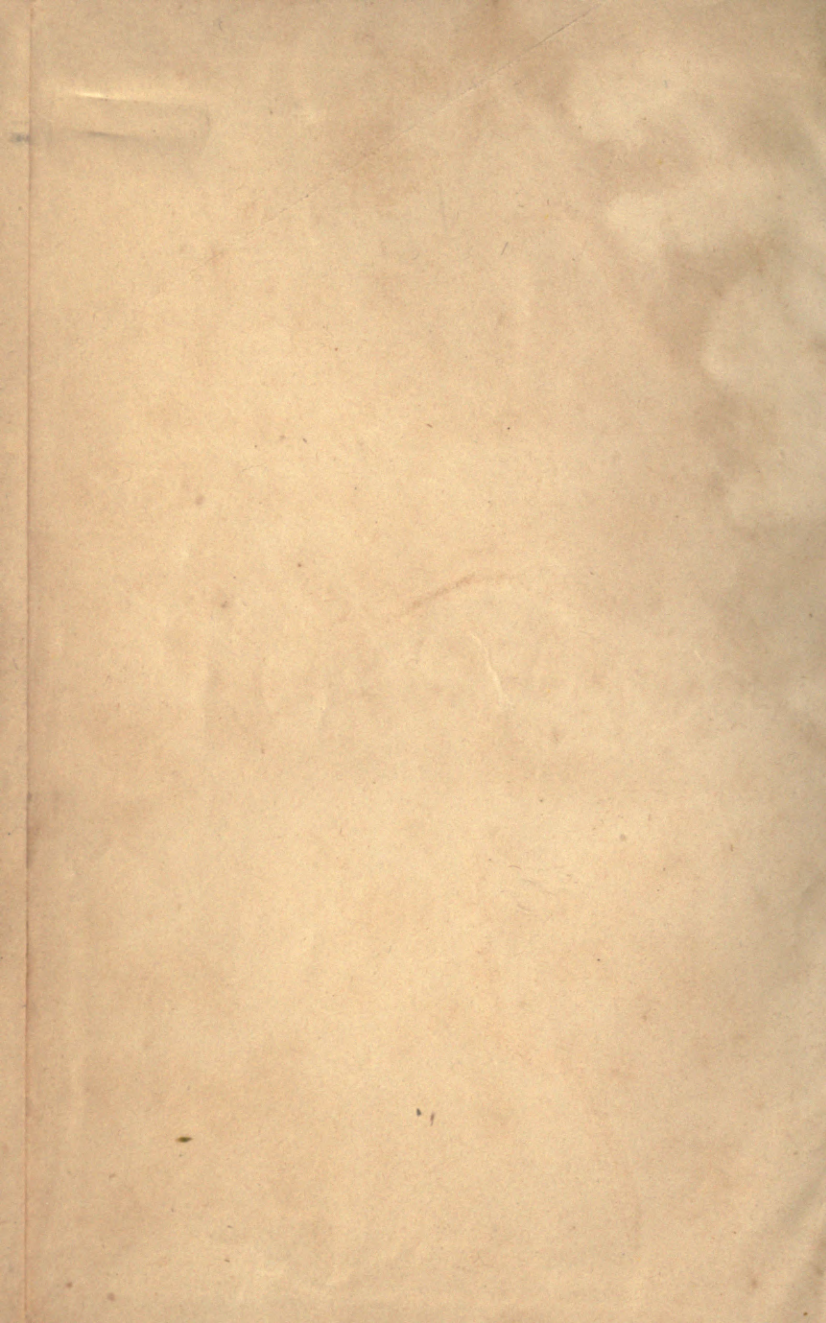


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CAP SHEAF

A Fresh Bundle.

BY LEWIS MYRTLE.

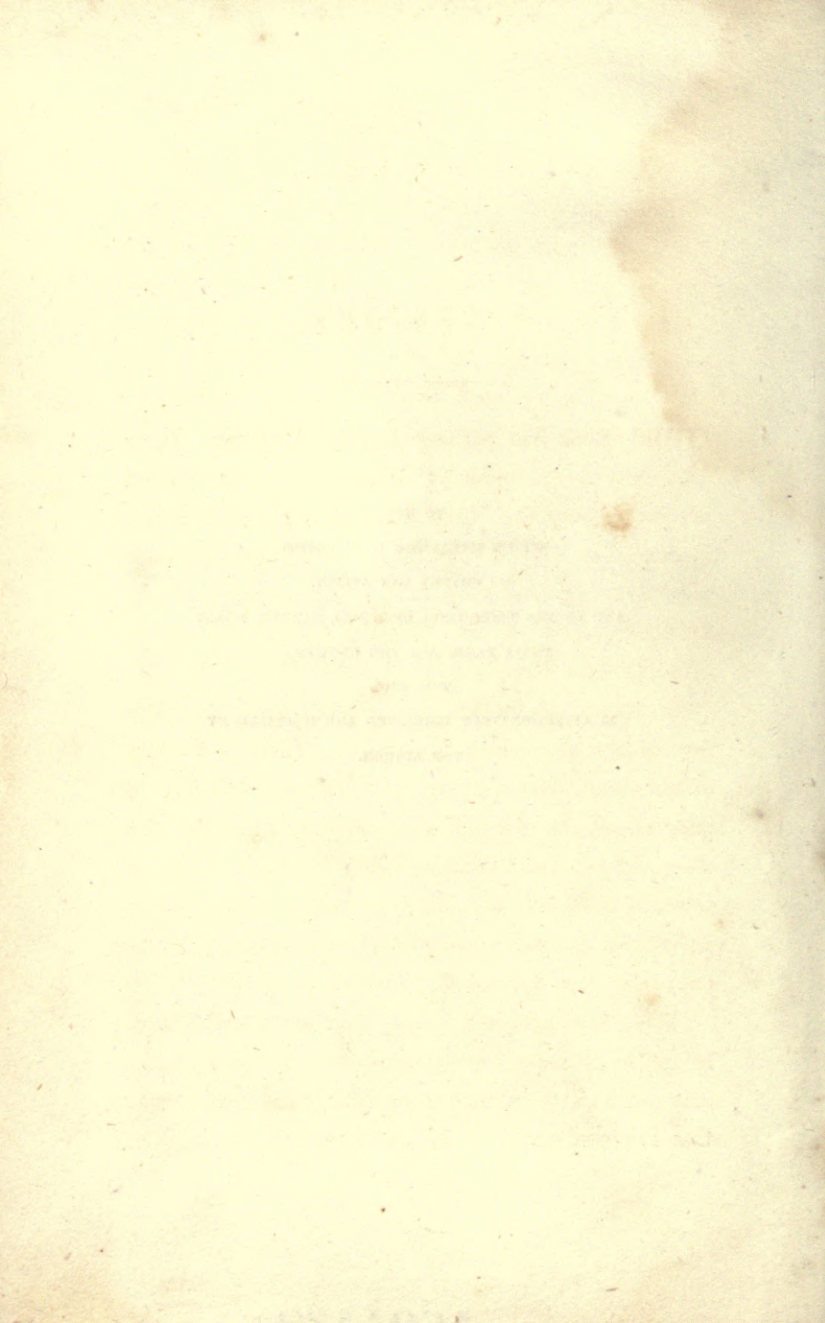


REDFIELD,
110 & 112 NASSAU-STREET, NEW YORK.
1853.

ENTERED, according to Act of Congress, in the Year One Thousand
Eight Hundred and Fifty-three, by J. S. REDFIELD, in the Clerk's
Office of the District Court, for the Southern District of New York.

A. CUNNINGHAM, STEREOTYPYER,
183 WILLIAM STREET, N. Y.

TO HER,
WHOSE SINGLENESS OF DEVOTION
NO CHANGE CAN AFFECT,
AND OF THE PROMPTINGS OF WHOSE EARNEST HEART
THESE PAGES ARE THE GROWTH,—
THIS BOOK
IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED AND INSCRIBED BY
THE AUTHOR.



PREFATORY.

THIS Book has nothing like an Ambition. It is only a collection of such simple and earnest Stories as may find brief lodgment in the reader's Heart. The very fancies that run through it, though they can lay no claim to brilliancy, at least may ask some degree of favor for the sake of the feeling of which they were begot.

In a day so fruitful of books as this, there are few without some high pretension. There is nothing of the kind, however, to this. If the still life it pursues, or the natural sentiment it utters, or the simple topics it illustrates, shall kindle a fancy or warm a heart,—it will have reached its end. I had no higher thought, when these pages were first put on paper; and I have no higher hope now.

While Romance and Travel open broad and delightful walks to readers everywhere, the hidden by-paths may not be without their own quiet pleasures;—paths that are bordered with Heart's-Ease and Sweet-Brier,

and fragrant with Hawthorn and Fern ; where dews lie freshest on leaves and grass ; and golden sunshine nestles in the swart bosom of the shadows.

I do not say that these by-paths in literature are new ; but they are not overmuch traveled, and that gives them almost the attractiveness of a new discovery. The grass grows in them ; and they look thus greener. The flowers one plucks in them smell sweeter, and seem fresher. In fine, the life that lies all along them, is a life of beauty,—and simplicity,—and truth.

The Book was not written for the critics ; yet if any, or all of it shall furnish them with a savory morsel, I wish them much joy of their repast. While there may be much in its style, or its temper, that they will probably order to be recast,—I still feel a secret satisfaction in knowing that its heart, at least, is sound to the core. Not a line of it can be charged with an affectation of feeling.

And in the earnest hope that the reader will be willing to respond with some cordiality to its tone and its topics,

I subscribe myself, simply and sincerely,—

LEWIS MYRTLE.

NEW YORK, Nov., 1852.

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CAP SHEAF:

A Fresh Bundle.

A SHADOW ON THE ROOF.

HOME is a foretaste of Heaven! At least, so I could not help thinking, while the fire-dogs glowed with the bright flame that jetted against their ruddy cheeks.

I had been musing on the endless chances there were in a man's life; the varied views we take, as we get on; the ceaseless turmoil, that bewilders us; and the greedy scramble, that jostles us this way and that:—and I thought there was left us *one* nook of safety, where the maddest world-storms cannot reach. My heart grew grateful; and my fancies ran on at once to weave into the tapestry of my thoughts the picture of the Home Spot, that always melts us into love.

Everybody looks forward to the time when he shall have a HOME. No matter what it is, or where the spot; no matter how rich, or how poor; the golden atmosphere that hangs about the name of Home, is the medium through which we view the object itself. A garret, or a palace; a hovel, or a hall; pinching poverty, or wasteful wealth; to our hearts it is ever the same. Only let it be Home. The name itself is a magnet; and all our brightest hopes, like glittering steel-filings, are caught up by it as by instinct. It binds us by cords that are stronger than bands of iron; by mystic powers above all worldly rules, beyond all systems, irresistible, and ever-enduring. What statutes so binding as the unwritten code of the fireside!

— I drew a picture of an odd little moss-speckled roof, dropped down in a clump of living green. It was all walled in with dense leaves and flowers. Vines clambered to the eaves, twining leafy garlands about the columns on their way, and hanging trembling bunches of blossoms just over my head. Honeysuckles poured rich streams of fragrance into the little parlor from out their ruby goblets; and gadding sprays burst through the opened window in upon the floor. A neat piazza belted the building, around which grew an intertwined lattice of leafy shelter. There was a low and broad bench

on the piazza, where three might comfortably sit in the cool of the summer evenings, and drink in the exhilarating draught that drew through the screen.

—— I imagined I sat on that bench already.

A lawn of the deepest emerald stretches down to the road, threaded by but a single walk, on either side of which the rich turf rolls itself up in smooth and full ridges. Clumps of syringas stand like sentries here and there, and the air is loaded with their sweet fragrance. A dwarf fir on one side, and a dwarf fir on the other. No tawdry-looking flower-beds, laid out at such pains to catch the vacant eye; no gaudy and glaring flowers, to inspire only discontent by their contrast with the unpretending green all around them:—only wild-roses,—honeysuckles,—trumpet-creepers,—and luxuriant woodbines. They fling a leafy veil all over the spot. They wreath the posts; shadow the light screen; fringe the casements; hide the rough angles of carpentry; and thatch the low roof with their ten thousand leaves.

Behind this little homestead, that now seems to rise out of the living wood-coals before me,—there is a carefully plotted garden; where the squash-vines run riot over the mellow soil, and on the rough back of the old stone wall; and bees keep up their busy hum all through the summer day among the yellow squash-blossoms; and the airy

humming-bird daintily sips honey and dew from the white and scarlet bean-blossoms; and the green and plump currants hang in myriad clusters, for the length of the garden avenue.

A little gate swings back at your touch, and shuts itself as you enter. A clean and hard walk conducts you to the extreme end of the ground. There are no terraces; no uplands; nor lowlands; nor miry, swampy places. It is all an unbroken plain, into which you can almost step from your kitchen door. It is your little kitchen farm; and the owner of a thousand acres boasts not more of his vast heaps, than you do of your little stores.

What phalanxes of fruit-trees! The rich damsons look plump and pulpy, in among the leaves; and white, and red, and black cherries are bursting out in bunches from the limbs; and pears, that will soon moisten your palate with their delicious juices,—are swelling, and softening, and ripening in the sun; and smooth-checked peaches are beginning to wear their most tempting blushes, as the down begins to wear away; and the luscious greenings are thrusting their round heads through the glossy leaves, to get a word of commendation from their owner; and the grapes are forming in long clusters on the vines that run over yonder trellised arbor.

A neat row of white hives is sheltered from the

cutting edge of the north wind by the wall, out from which streams a steady line of little laborers all through the day. They buzz in the squash-blossoms, and hum drowsily about the bean-flowers. They people the cherry, and plum, and ruddy apple-blows, and wing their way over into the adjacent field, where the sweet white-clover blooms, and beds of thyme breathe out their balm. All day long they keep at their work; up before you in the morning, and hardly quiet when you loiter in your garden at evening. Their street is never silent nor deserted, while Summer reigns in the fields and gardens.

You own a rich meadow beyond that pasture, and the grass is already rolling like waves in the sweeping breeze. Your heart swells, to see it glisten so in the sun; and you confess to yourself, that there is a secret joy in the very thought that it is yours. A few trees dot the pasture-land, and patient cows stand chewing their cuds, and stamping their hoofs, in the shade. They look mildly at you, as you pass, but never stop grinding the cud. You almost wonder if they, like yourself, have "sweet and bitter fancies!"

A belt of wood bounds your pasturage on the north side, where you often go with your young wife, on these balmy mornings in June, and gather primroses, and violets,—or saunter thoughtfully in

the shadows. A thousand memories your lips cannot fashion into expression, hang up, like golden fruitage, among those old tree-boughs, and linger about the aisles. You feel that you know—

——“ Each lane, and every alley green,
Dingle, or bushy dell, of this wild-wood,
And every bosky bourn from side to side,—
Your daily walks, and ancient neighborhood.”

A noisy brook riots through the solitude, curling its waters darkly beneath some gnarled old root, and leaping up to kiss the leaves of the wild-vines that dangle from the branches. Its noisy echoes people the place. It washes over shining pebbles,—slips between rank sedges, upon a muddy bed,—steals softly through the emerald turf,—and rattles off with a gay laugh, and a saucy clapping of its hands, down by the fence, and away through the low meadow.

Home, thought I, taking a new start in my musings, is not altogether *without* doors;—and, with this thought, I began to paint the *inner* Home Life, that fuses all our thoughts, in its mystic crucible, into thoughts of Love.

A wife!—a young wife,—all love! The little cottage is full of sunshine. There never, surely, were *such* smiles before; never such musical laughter, bubbling all the way up from the heart. She reads to you, when you are restless and ill; and

you read to her in turn, when she is weary with the never-broken round of household cares. She watches your breathing, when you are curtained in the sick-room; binds up your head with damp and cool bandages; places a wine-glass of fresh flowers on the little stand beside your bed; and talks to you in the low music of her soft and melting voice.

She is as airy as a Sprite, and as graceful as a fawn; yet she is none too ethereal to repay your love with genial sympathy, and welcome words, and patient, self-denying deeds. She does her hair in papers to please your boyish whim, but never breaks a link of the chain that binds her heart to the Home Hearth. She chats with you of Montaigne,—and Suckling,—and Spencer,—and sweet Jeremy Taylor; and drinks in your syllables, when you talk to her of Cordelia,—and Corinne,—of Jean Jacques, and Coleridge, and Keats;—yet you never harbor the suspicion that she is a *blue*.

And she always dresses so charmingly, too! Nothing can surpass, for sweet and unpretending grace, those summer morning costumes, in which she trips out through the open door, and slips her dainty hand through your arm for an early walk. Her throat is as fair as the fairest alabaster; and the scarlet just tinges her cheeks with matchless beauty; and as she looks at you so lovingly from out those large, dark, dreamy eyes, you almost un-

consciously draw her closer to your side, and press your lips to the forehead of your child-wife.

It is home, wherever she is. If you stroll with her down the green lane, chasing the playing sun-blotches that fall on your path—your cottage, and all its wealth, is in the lane with you. Without her, it is home nowhere. You seem to lose your reckoning. The sun is blotted out of the sky. You grope your way. The birds do not sing. You see no flowers,—nor silver-winged insects—nor gaudy butterflies. Your heart swells with misgivings for her, lest some impossible harm has come nigh her. And your spirits grow weary, and faint; and your thoughts brood in desolate places; and your hold on life grows weaker, and weaker;—till you catch her smile again in the low doorway, or fling your arms around her at the little wicket.

Home is Heaven—say you to yourself,—as you draw your boots at evening, and in slippered feet sit down to hear the simple story of her day's life. She draws her chair beside your own—and looks alternately in the glowing fire, and your delighted eyes.

Foolish little creature!—you tell her; she sees only *herself* in your eyes! It is conceit!

And she will shake her head at you so playfully,—and lay her little white hand over your mouth so lovingly,—and in such a childish tone, tell you

that you are her "naughty boy,"—that she makes you love her ten times the more, in very spite of yourself.

As you sit before the gleaming hearth, you read to her from large books of travels, or from charming and simple poems, or from some sad and touching tales; and when you suddenly look up, you unexpectedly see the tears swimming in her eyes. You stop to ask her what it is that so saddens her; but the sunshine instantly breaks out in the midst of the April rain, and she only laughs at you for your inquisitive folly. And then you tell her, half seriously and half in jest, that woman is just what *she* is now,—half smiles, and the other half tears. For your impudence you get a kiss, and struggle valiantly to free yourself from her embrace. But your release is only on condition that *she* is excepted from your remark. And in a sudden impulse again, you confess that there is no truth at all in the libel you have just uttered.

Your friends wonder how it is, that some men can stumble on such a mine of happiness as you have; and in the midst of their compliments and self-reproaches, they get urgent invitations to visit you as often as they will. And then they protest, that your dear Maggie is so charming; and has so much grace; and presides at table with such simple dignity! They will tell you, when you stroll

with them out on the piazza, they would have married long ago, if they could only have been assured of ——

You interrupt them at this point. You know that it had better remain unspoken. It is flattery you can bear but little better than Maggie herself.

Your relations come a great way to see you in your new and quiet home:—some to congratulate, —some to advise and forewarn,—and some to study out the secret weaknesses. But they are all alike melted by the magic of her simple and earnest love. Their cynical syllables die on their lips. They forget all their own perplexities, in the sunshine of your complete happiness. They even become envious, and almost tell you so. But that they need not do: you can read it in their looks.

Maggie is perfection,—they say to themselves. Never need a man have a better wife. Never found man a truer one.

—— But she is only a *child*!

Ah! would they, then, rob you of the untold wealth of her early love?—of the fragrance of her freshest feelings?—of the dew, of which you found her young heart so full?—Can there be no love, except the fruit of policy?—no marriages, but those of convenience?—no heart-riches, save those of years? Is your child-wife any the less a woman, because her love is so undivided?—any the less a

helpmeet, because she is such an innocent?—any the less a blessing, because she knows the world only through you?

Must our hearts be torn, and seared, and probed, and worn with the iron,—before we can learn to love? Doth profounder happiness lie in the broad ways of world-wisdom, than broods all along the by-ways of innocence? Can any statutes limit the impulses of the heart that is early inclined to love? Can there be no maturity, then, even in childishness?—no bliss, except it be embittered with the aloes of a cruel experience?

—— You reason your heart into conclusions that abundantly satisfy you, and leave your near-sighted relations to conclude what they will. So you are but strengthened in your happiness, and grounded in your hope of the future,—it is enough. They do not see through your eyes. Their hearts do not throb like yours. They would laugh at you remorselessly for your fine sentiments; and tell you, with a profoundly wise wag of their heads,—Love is'n't *bread and butter*!

But what of that? What care you? You retort—to yourself, of course,—But what blessing would bread and butter be *without* Love? And you stoutly resolve, laying aside the tenderness of your feelings for the moment, that you will make your Home Life a deep sermon for these blind rela-

tions;—and that each year shall be a new and brighter page for them to peruse.

— Your and your wife's heart are knit by a new tie:—stronger, deeper, fuller, than any you have yet known.

She shows you her infant; and begs, by the tender looks of her moistened eyes, that you will love it for her sake.

— Ay, you respond,—and for its own, too!

It is a girl. It comes to you like an angel in a dream. It has the innocent, yet mysterious smile of a seraph. You lean long over it while it sleeps, and your heart goes up to God in a psalm of thanksgiving.

A new root has struck into the heart-soil. You feel that you must watch it patiently, and guard it with the tenderest solicitude. It is a part of your child wife; it is a part of yourself. Your souls have been knit mysteriously together, and this is the new form they have taken. Oh, how you yearn towards it already! How you wish it could receive into itself the crowded feelings that swell your heart! How you desire that you could read the hidden history of its spirit life, and satisfy yourself that it is really an offshoot from your own soul! And yet, there hangs a strange feeling about you,

that it can be no other than the twin-soul of yourself and your dear Maggie.

“A babe in a house, is a well-spring of pleasure.”

So the poet tells you, and so your heart believes. The countenance of your wife tells you so. Her cares are doubled; but her troubles are divided. Your sympathies are instinctively more ready, and full, and effective, for her; and the burdens, in consequence, only become the lighter. She does not now stop so often, to humor your little caprices; but your caprices, you find, have all vanished. You do not now exact so much of her precious time. You readily give it all up to another. Ay, —and you give up very much of your own precious time, too.

The little cottage was full of sunshine before: now it is all ablaze. A new life has begun within it. A mysterious germ has suddenly shot up beneath the little roof-tree. What was before only a pictured fancy, has now become a living fact. Your tenderness has budded into a palpable form. Your love has become impersonated. Mysteries are expanding, and ripening into experiences. The wealth of your heart you can now hold in your hands. And still the mystery lurks in the revelation; and the dream sleeps in the reality; and the spirit does not altogether reveal itself in the living

form. You catch only bright and broken glimpses; the brighter, because broken.

And this is the study that Heaven has given your heart. It will surely serve to perplex you more and more, every day of your life; and the more accustomed to your outward senses it becomes, the less will your heart have learned of its real nature. And it is by so divine a mystery, that God has promised to keep your heart full of joy, while yet it continues to hunger for more.

— But time does not stop for your happiness. It rather seems envious of your possession.

What a calm, quiet day, is the day of the Christening! How sweetly your little cherub looks, in that snowy lace cap! And how she makes all the spectators smile, as she throws out her chubby hands, and, with bubbling syllables, looks up so earnestly into the face of the white-robed clergyman! How the soft air of the morning,—the fragrant drifts from the clustering roses and clumps of lilacs,—and the mellow warmth of the bright sunshine,—all help to swell the joy of your heart, till it seems that it must at length overflow in tears!

The baby goes before, in the arms of the maid; and Maggie,—now dearer to you than ever,—leaning on your arm, follows close behind. Your spirits are all in a glow. You scent the blossoms, and tell your wife how ravishingly sweet they are to the

senses, though she knows it quite as well as yourself. You look up into the stainless bosom of the sky, and down again to the earth. Your eyes chase swarming butterflies, and you fancy for the moment that the flowers have taken wings. You peep over into neighboring gardens, and across rolling lawns. And then your eyes come back to your wife again, and you draw her still closer to your side.

"Be careful not to stumble!"—you caution the maid.

Maggie releases herself from your arm for a moment, and takes a few hasty steps forward to see that the child is safe. She lays her own cambric kerchief over its face, that the garish sunlight may not weaken its eyes,—and is at your side again.

—— You ask yourself if ever two loving hearts were so happy before! ——

Your little Alice soon becomes the pet of the whole neighborhood. Children drop in at the cottage on their way to school, and ask to see "the baby." And maids from distant houses bring other babies to see this beautiful wonder of yours; and you laugh till you cry, to see the inexpressibly wise looks with which they will regard each other. You catch her up, in one of your sudden impulses, and toss her quite to the ceiling; and she will be so full of glee with your playful effort, that her fat

little arms will instantly go up to you again, for a repetition of the fun.

Books!—what are books to you *now*? There is not a tithe of the life on all their pages, that you read every moment in the face of your own offspring. And how burdensome become your daily duties, at thinking of the hours that must elapse before you can see your idol child again. How heavily lag the moments between morning and afternoon. You quite begrudge time of the happiness of which it is robbing you. No weary, heart-saddened school-boy ever looked forward more wistfully to his dismissal.

—— Your child at length syllables your name
—“papa!”

What a fresh joy!

To feel that you are recognized by a new spirit; that your very smiles are at last rightly interpreted; that your love is beginning to bud and blossom in the warmth of home!

To know that your day-dreams are faster and faster ripening into realities; that what you once regarded as a beautiful myth, is every day becoming less a fable; that the ripe, red bud, is steadily coming through the parted leaves!

—— Never was there such a child before! Never, you think, was there so devoted a father. You carry it to the door in your arms, and let its

ruthless little hands crush the swinging bells of the fragrant columbines. You learn it to creep about upon the thick carpet, pushing before it smooth and red-lipped sea-shells. You teach it to pick open your lips with its playful fingers, and reward it by a song beginning with—"Bah! bah! black sheep!" You blow kisses into its dimpled neck, till it hiccoughs for violent laughter.

As you sing it to sleep, it will open faintly its drowsy lids, and hum with a baby discord the last syllables of your lullaby. And when it has finally sunk into deep slumber, you gaze long and earnestly upon its passionless face, and silently pray God it may long keep your heart as fresh and pure as it is at this moment. And then your dear Maggie comes into the room, and looks into the shaded face, and whispers, as if in the holiest confidence to you,—“She's asleep!”

Maggie prepares the cradle, and into its depth you carefully lay your treasure. It partly turns its head, as you move to lay it down,—but the sleep is unbroken. Your wife throws a long veil over its face, and you both leave the room together.

— And are there any noisy world-joys, that usurp the reign of a man's heart, at all comparable to so simple a joy as this? Sleeps there anywhere a fountain so full of sweet and clear waters as here? Can a man from any source so readily bring

down the fertilizing dew of heaven upon the soil of his heart? Is busy street-life as fruitful in deep and abiding happiness, as this innocent, almost child-like Home Life? Doth the ring of dollars echo one half as pleasantly as the ring of your musical baby-laugh?

Tell me, busy world-schemer, if all your successful speculations can compensate your inner heart for the remorse that must ever gnaw, when you reckon up the few short hours you spend at your hearth?—if the hollow voices of men do not mock all your hopes, when a swift memory of Home rushes over your brain?—if the fruits of success do not turn to dry ashes on the lips of enjoyment, as your heart reproaches you with their uncounted cost?

— But the scene suddenly shifts. You are in the little nursery. The curtains are all closely drawn, and the light is subdued and sombre.

Your angel-child lies on the bed. Her face is burning with feverish fires. Her hands are hot, and her head throbs with the fever. But her lips are parched and colorless. The dreamy eye has lost its lustre. She tosses her hands about restlessly, and murmurs faint and broken syllables. Her breathing is short, and fearfully quick.

You bend over the bed, and lay your own cheek close to her hot cheek, and ask her, in a sad whis-

per, if she is *very* sick,—as if she could catch the meaning of your words. But she interprets the caress, though the words go unheeded by her.

Maggie stands by you, and you gaze long and anxiously at your child together. You both tremble, to see that the expression has died out from her eyes. You fear far more than you dare trust to words, when you behold their growing glassiness. Your wife stoops down and kisses the child's forehead, and gently smooths back its straggling hair, and talks mournfully to it of sickness, and tells it, tremulously, she hopes it will soon be better again.

You cannot stay to listen, and to witness, longer. Your eyes are growing moist, and you dash away a glittering tear, as you glide swiftly through the door.

The doctor meets you on the embowered little piazza. He is a kind and gentle man, and you place full confidence in his skill.

"Doctor," you say, "save my child!"

He has not a word for you in reply, but walks steadily in. There is a terrible earnestness in his tread. It smites upon your sore heart fearfully. You have not the courage to follow after him, but remain on the little bench on the piazza. The moments seem like hours to you. You wish he would return again; and yet you have not the heart to go back and learn the fate of your off-

spring. You dread to hear even the best, fearing it may be the worst.

Again in the nursery.

—— Your darling child is dead,—just gone!

Oh! was ever such wo!

Maggie throws herself upon your breast, and buries her face from your sight. You hear her low moans, and feel the deep, strong throes of her agony. *Now* it is that you feel the need of a strong arm on which to lean yourself.

But you have no words. They would but vainly mock your grief. Your sorrows are dumb; they cannot find their way to your lips. Nothing now but silence—and sobs—and tears.

You gaze at the face of your dead child, standing by the bedside,—and your grief looms up big and gloomy before you. You would cast off your hold on life altogether. The bud has been blasted before it had time to round into the fullness of maturity.

But another moan from your equally bereaved wife, recalls you to yourself; and you now feel that you are bound to her by a double bond, that will grow stronger through your lifetime. You keep your eyes, however, still fixed upon your dead child; and the sad lines of the Poet sing in your sadder heart,—

“ There is no fold, however watched and tended,
But one dead lamb is there ;
There is no fireside, howsoe'er defended,
But has one vacant chair.”

— It is as bright and balmy a morning in summer, as ever dawned.

The odors of the lilacs and laburnums float through the open window into the little parlor.

There is a dense crowd in the rooms; and people loiter about the outer doors, talking in low tones. Everything looks dark, and fearful, and forbidding. The crowd seems but a bank of gloom.

A little coffin, polished and smooth, stands upon the table in the middle of the room. Its lid is laid back, and your dead child's face is upturned to your own; but the light has gone out of the beautiful eyes, and the prattle has died forever on the pale lips.

A few white snow-drops are strewn over the coffin; and mothers lift their blue-eyed children in their arms, and let them look in silence at the face of the little corpse.

And parents, who have been themselves bereaved, strive to keep down the choking sensation in their throats, and turn suddenly away with their eyes full of blinding tears.

They sing a hymn. Your young wife—now all the world to your bleeding heart—leans heavily

the while against you, and sobs as if she would not be comforted. You draw her closer—closer to you. Oh, how much more deep is your love for her now! How much stronger is the bond that has been strained with sorrow!

— Back again from the silent cemetery. Little Alice you have left behind you.

The house is deserted. Your wife has thrown herself upon the bed, and buried her face deeply in the pillows. You enter the little parlor. How silent! How sad are all the voices of the summer morning, as they reach you through the open windows!

You seat yourself by one of the windows, and pluck leaf after leaf of the vine that shelters it.—How desolate! How deserted!—Was ever trial like this!

You wonder why your heart was schooled so mysteriously to love, and then cruelly crushed with such a weight of grief. You think there must be something wrong in the ordering of events, and your untutored heart broods over unformed thoughts of rebellion against God's goodness. The agony is so great, that you become, temporarily, its victim.

— And then there comes—slowly, after long reflection, after fervid prayer,—a recollection of your heart's earlier desire; a remembrance of your

earnest hope, that your infant might be the means of keeping your heart *full*, and *fresh*, and *free*.

A golden gleam of consolation breaks through the clouds that beset your soul. A bright ray of light comes dancing across the dark and troubled waters of your heart. You remember your early prayer, uttered when this angel-child first began to grow into the heart of your nature; and you believe that the prayer reached Heaven!

All through your lifetime now, little Alice will ever be your CHILD. She will add nothing to her years, in your memory. Her image, enshrined in your heart, will keep it ever fresh and young, through the silent lapse of years. And when you lie down to die yourself,—weary, and worn, and heart-broken with the world's selfishness,—you will be consoled beyond all measure, with the hope of regaining your child again:—the same gentle, pure, spotless child, that has been for years so mysteriously drawing you to her with the golden-linked memory of her brief existence!

— Maggie lays her head upon your shoulder, and you weep together for deep and unutterable joy.

WOODS.

IT is not the silence; nor the weird and sombre thoughts; nor the unbroken circle of subdued feelings:—but it is the Presence,—the Spirit Presence,—that ever draws me to these dim old Woods.

Not drowsy Dryads—nor fabulous Fauns—nor Satyrs—nor Gnomes—nor any of the thronging tribes that infest mythology:—these are but *material* creations, whose fantastic freaks can do no more than entangle the fancy in the glittering mesh they fling about it. They exercise no spell over the heart.

There is a spirit in these mysterious Woods, that seems twin-born of your own soul. It plays about the gnarled and knotted tree-trunks, like the gossamer gray moss that trails in long plumes from their branches. It dances, like a thing of life, about the edges of the emerald leaves. It rides upon the bars of golden sunshine, that break through the leafy lattice overhead, and struggles with the eyes that would perseveringly seek to behold its form. It breathes delicious airs upon

your bared brow,—airs that do not enervate, but refresh. It meets your delighted glance from the crystal of the cloistered pool; and you think you have caught a sweet glimpse of Heaven.

You stretch yourself on moss-carpets, and look into the sky. There is but a hand's-breadth there. Yet it is all Heaven. It seems larger, the longer you gaze into its azure.

You wander, in vision, through the shadowy vistas that stretch away so boundlessly before you. There is—especially at the hour of sunset—a feeling in your heart, that you are in some huge cathedral. Yet these woods are grander than any cathedral. You think of tinted windows—so chastened are the sun's rays, coming through the braided branches. You feed your heart freely on ravishing pictures of Madonnas; with gay and grand strains of music, blended strangely into seraphic chorals, and indescribable symphonies. You catch faintly notes that run through the whole diapason.

—— I have built me wooden seats, and cushioned rocks with tufted mosses, at different points of the woods; and in one chosen place, I have erected a rude Kiosque, where, at all times of the day, I may enjoy the emotions that live nowhere but in this unbroken solitude. These spots are but so many stand-points for me, from which I have a habit of viewing the world about me. And many a mem-

ory,—and many a grief,—and many a hope,—at each one of them, has lived and died again. Indeed, these spots are associated in my mind only with the nameless feelings that have, at each, come regularly to meet me; just as the sight of the half-forgotten initials you have carved upon some smooth tree-rind, will people your heart again with the most painful or pleasurable emotions.

Noon—high noon! Midsummer,—and in the heart of the wood!

—— What power has pen to seize the outlines even of the ethereal feelings, that distil like dew upon the heart at such a time? What life has language, when it would seek to dress them in the tricked tinsel of words? What sympathy has thought, when it would try to run a parallel with their viewless course?

I am at this hour seated on a gray rock, in the deep silence of a little ravine. The garish sun is at the meridian. The distant hedgerows are powdered with the dust raised by rattling wains; and laborers trudge languidly along to dinner, their vests, like heavy burdens, thrown across their besmirched arms. How refreshing a cup of cool water, trickling from this mossy fountain at my feet, would be to them at this moment! Home is yet a good way off; yet they persevere. Their

tongues are parched and swollen. They can see the lines of heat, wavering over the plain, and above the road before them; and it makes them feel faint,—only the sight of them. They even think of “giving out;” so oppressed are they.

But there is no sun *here*; no dust; no heat. Sirius rages fiercely without; but Elysium is lapped here within. The air does not oppress you; it only makes you drowsy. Your spirit is lulled by the silence,—a silence you can almost feel—into the sweetest dreams. You fancy you hear the musical tinkle of the emerald leaves, as a wanton gust rattles them together like so many shields. The dripping of the water upon the dark stones that pave the brooklet, sounds like the melodious chime of silver bells. And the gurgling of the stream in its narrow throat below, fills your fancy with the quaintest and the simplest similitudes.

Blotches of golden sunlight play upon the long and coarse grasses about me, chequering the place, and chequering all my thoughts. I hear the hoarse caw of a crow in the resounding distance, and the cry is instantly caught up by the innumerable company. I look up at the sky; but boughs, and sprays, and leaves, have screened it all. I think that by retreating from the heat of the sun, I have shut out from my vision all the blue Heaven also. And then my eye falls upon the little gem of a

pool near me,—set so deeply in its frame-work of mosses, and fringed about with the rare arbuscles and pale water-flowers. And there I see Heaven again. The blue field sleeps calmly in the depth of the fountain. I grow suddenly eager to satisfy myself. In my fever, I thrust my hand into the water.

—— Alas ! my glimpse of Heaven is dashed into a thousand fragments !

—— So it is—I think—with those who, in the excess of their selfishness, would make all enjoyment *material*.

At sunset, nowhere can such charming visions,—such endeared associations—and such holy thoughts be found as in the Wood.

On the hill-side, or on the mountain-heights, nothing offers itself to the soul but grandeur. In the broad meadows and champaigns, only soothing visions. But in the Woods, refulgent with the golden gleams of the sun, there are rich and matchless paintings ; the framework of a lifetime of dreams ; the most quiet and tender fancies, crossing and re-crossing each other, like yonder bars of yellow light ; and the most genial and placid emotions.

You feel now, as your picture-filled eyes rove in their delightful rounds, that this is not the old earth

with which you have been familiar. You seriously question yourself, whether you may not have been mysteriously transplanted to another, and an ethereal region. You think that the Woods about the old homestead never wore such a beauty before.

— It is only because your own heart was never rightly attuned before to the enjoyment of the spiritual, that still lingers about the material. Now, your soul's inner chambers are opened. The sunlight turns all their furniture at once to gold!

Seated beneath these venerable oaks, your eye swims with the scenes that crowd upon it. At first, you fancy it is some grand panorama, slowly unrolling itself before you. Here go pictures of the rarest beauty. There glide and go by scenes of the deepest interest. Here—move visions of men and women, gaily attired, as for some masquerade. Here are troops of Hopes, all moving forward to an uniform tread, with banners of azure and gold above them. And there are Dreams,—you recognize them all at a glance—bedizened gaily with rich cloths, and costly fringes; and flaunting in the yellow-light the rare broideries that are only theirs.

You carry your eyes back to the point at which they started, determined to go over with such charming illusions again. They move slowly for-

ward; but they do not catch the glimpses of the same pictures as before.

The illusion, however, has not vanished; it has only changed.

This time you see arrowy rivers, shooting their glistening lengths through smooth-shaven meadows, or glancing swiftly between vine-bedecked hills. You hear their roar at the dark gorges, and look up at the beetling cliffs that topple over them. Your eyes revel among the walls of strong old feudal castles, from whose turrets and pinnacles wave long locks of golden grass. You try to think it may be only the streaming mosses from the oak-boughs; but your Fancy is on fire, and you can think of nothing but the castles.

Gay cities pass before you, as before the eyes of some swift traveler; cities upon the plain, and cities by the bounding flood. And waters—glancing and gleaming—are inextricably entangled with them, like threads of silken skeins.

You see spires and domes above you, on every hand. You behold long lines of streets and avenues, throbbing and pulsating, like veins, with human life. You meet smiling faces, and catch echoes of musical sounds. You hear the click of a thousand hammers, and the crystal ring of a thousand anvils. You never stop, however. There is too much to be seen, that you should not delay.

— You are in glittering Brussels, where are innumerable associations to enchain you. Again—you are in gay Florence; and the brimming Arno presents you with the clearest transcripts of heaven in its pellucid bosom. Now you are in Venice; and the broad Laguna stretches out before you, like a shield of burnished silver. You see gondolas going noiselessly on their liquid way; and catch entrancing strains from golden-stringed guitars. You see rows of pearly teeth in the balconies; you are pierced by bright eyes through ugly dominos; you hear musical laughter from faces tossed dexterously aside; and are imperceptibly bewitched with the soft airs that blow from every quarter upon you.

Then come visions of more cities, and of villages, and of quiet hamlets, sleeping in shadowy glens, or nestling upon the declivous sides of lofty mountains. Then—you see the sun-embrowned peasant men and women, gathering the empurpled grapes from a thousand vineyards, and chatting gaily in their homely attire. You likewise hear their vineyard-songs; but they are not the saturnalian songs of the train of Bacchus. They stir your heart with the remembrance of sweetest joys.

And some sudden snapping of a bough,—some passing wind-gust, that seems to shake out showers of gold from clustering leaves, breaks off the thread

of this bright dream,—or puffs it all away, like feathery fancies, into the air above my head.

But the dream leaves its outline behind. Though the reality doth not exist before the eyes, yet it hath deeply drawn its marks upon the heart. Untold associations have suddenly sprung into being, that will dance about these old boughs, each time my eyes linger among them. So,—they are not merely crooked, gnarled, moss-spotted outlines to me. So,—they are not simply branching oak-antlers. They have a life. They frame in pictures of gay scenes, and support the work and activity of proud cities.

And my dreams climb up through these branches upon the golden bars of sunlight, till they are all lost in the deep of the stainless blue beyond. And my indefinable longings go out through them, till they soar and reach the very heaven they would attain at last. And sweet hopes hang clustered upon them, like the blushing branches of wild grapes they yearly bear.

— Morning—noon—and night,—these Woods haunt me with the spirit that broods in their aisles and arches. I cannot seize it, and question it of its origin or its purpose. I only know its *power*. If I enter these sombre recesses,—it matters little at what time or season,—this Spirit is sure to be upon me. It silently subdues my heart. I feel a finger

lightly laid upon the lip of my thoughts, that they may not grow suddenly tumultuous and uncontrollable. It silences all my complaints, and strengthens my soul with the repose it most needs.

For blithe and ringing woodland melodies, however, no time surpasses the magical autumn time. Then it is, that the brush of an invisible artist has been skillfully and mysteriously employed. Every imaginable tint shades the crowding leaves. All Gobelin dyes stain the huge cloths that are flung over the trees. Merry children are in the upland, on their regular autumnal excursion for nuts. Their shrill voices ring far through the wide solitudes. They scream, in the overflow of their new delight. The air is bracing and keen; and no blood bounds so swiftly in the veins, as the blood of trooping children. Their echoes people the dim Woods with living thoughts. You think of ruddy health—of dancing spirits—of innocence of heart—of yet untasted sorrows—of heart-life, not yet crushed out;—and you wish, from your soul, you were only a child again!

What a magic in those merry voices! How they break, and swell, and spread, and die away upon the air,—like concentric circles in the broken surface of a lake! How contagious are they to the heart,—the heart that is in health, and *feels* the life it truly enjoys!

And if fairies and fays do, in reality, dwell in these solitudes, it is easiest for me to believe that *these* are they. They have their chosen retreats,—their sacred fountains,—their cool grottos,—their airy arbors,—and their shaded avenues. Each leaf-crested column has for them its charm. Every vine-girt trunk is encircled likewise with their love. They unwittingly make themselves tutelar divinities; and certainly none in mythology ever guarded the special objects of their care with a more single faith.

—— Here, too, one can see the source whence sprung the Gothic style of architecture. The imperious and ravaging clan, whose name has given the term its derivation, were roving denizens of the forests. And their rude instincts—not to dignify them with the title of *tastes*—have been built upon, and added to, till the rugged and enduring Gothic structure has come to associate itself with all that is massive and imposing.

You sit on this rude seat, and delight your eyes with carrying out the comparison your mind has thus suggested.

About you are standing the solid and enduring columns. Here are the shafts,—firm, upright, and immovable. You behold here the solemn aisles, and the sombre arches. Here is entablature; and cornice; and molding; and frieze. Here, among

the boughs, are those bewildering traceries, that branch out from the mullions into arches, and curves, and mystic lines, which the eye can scarcely follow for their entangling intricacy. Here are stretching fretted vaults, and groined ceilings, through which you catch sight of the deep blue of Heaven.

And as your delighted vision drops gradually to the earth, and loses itself in the mazy background of the mystic picture, you feel yourself irresistibly borne through long-drawn aisles, whose leafy ceilings chasten the light to a tone that is truly religious. You catch a view of flaming altars; and you fancy that burning censers swing silently to and fro above your head. You see no priests, who offer to shrive your soul of its earthly impurities, or order you to do meaningless penance; but there is still that Spirit-presence here,—more powerful, more winning, than all priests.

The intense tranquillity in which my existence is lapped here, excites emotions, and shadows of emotions,—so airy, so entangled, so involute, and so unreal when compared with any thing earthly,—that language is not able to seize and embody them, while they tremble upon the vibrating chords of the soul.

—— The freshly-stirred air, redolent of hillocks of new-mown hay, blows aside a pendulous bough,

and two white head-stones glimmer through the parted foliage.

—— The early called! They died before they knew sin!——

And my heart hovers about that sacred corner of the Wood. And I think that these twin snow-white slabs, are but emblems of the stainless purity of the beings whose lives they commemorate.

And I feel that it would be well, if we could all die young; before the ermine was stained and bedraggled in the dust of life's thoroughfare.

I instinctively feel that all this acquaintance with the world,—which men wisely, as they think, call experience,—is but little to be coveted. For the crystal clearness becomes, in time, bedimmed. Thick world-breaths and noisome vapors will foul the mirror. And the delicate flowers that begin to bloom in the heart-soil, are ruthlessly trampled upon, as if they were but worthless weeds.

My heart sickens, at thinking of the jostling, and crowding, and scrambling. My ambition deadens, at beholding the intrigue, the secret machinery, the dishonesty, and the dishonor, that seize upon everything, and call it their own. My feelings revolt, at thought of a rivalry with deceit, and hypocrisy, and heartlessness, and debasing envy. I count all things as nothing worth, when they are to be reached through such rough trials and perplexities.

And then, when disgust has utterly killed out desire, the heart reposes calmly on the knowledge of its own strength, and a sweet peace broods about it that charms all the existence. Then I feel that innocence, and purity, and a living faith, are worth all the rest together. Then I know what a vast wealth the soul has of its own. And I feel that these dead innocents—dead only to earthly misery—are rich, vastly rich, when compared with any of those who have hoarded and rolled up for a long life-time.

— But the little white head-stones in the green-wood! How strangely they stir my feelings all the time!

I remember they told me that the two children buried there, were suddenly stricken; and that they were obliged to remove them at once into the Wood.

— Yes; but little thought they at the time, that this was the fittest place for such. Mayhap, they did not pause to think, how the choral anthems from feathered songsters would, through the long and dreamy days, and far into the still summer nights, roll and tremble unceasingly over their graves.

They forgot how sweetly the soft winds would sweep over these mounds; and draw through the long grasses like melancholy music upon reeds.

They thought not that ministering angels could come here undisturbed ; nor knew of the holy hush that would ever brood about this spot, and make it sacred in the heart of him who should linger here.

—— A grave in a greenwood !

I would have mine there. No clatter of the world's loud mechanism ; no dust raised by tramping feet ; no sharp echoes from angered voices. Only calmness—only green leaves—only chastened light—only subdued emotions and influences.

What place more fitting for a grave ? Where could an overwearyed frame slumber so sweetly ? Where would the dreamless rest be so continually unbroken ?

—— And the head-stone would always be so snowy, among the deep green leaves !

—— And the waving of the funereal mosses from overhead, would ever be so stately and mournful !

—— And the sweeping of the winds through the long branches, would ever so sadden the air with the dirge-like music of their strains !

—— And the sleep would be so deep,—so calm,—so unbroken, through all the golden cycles of a limitless Eternity !——

BUBBLES.

I HAD thrown myself into my arm-chair one day,—it was in the latter part of a long and tedious winter,—and was gradually losing myself in the sweet and smooth flow of feelings, that always sets about me here.

The wintry winds had brawled themselves hoarse over the fields of snow in the distance, and were wheeling and charging in thick squadrons down the wooded road, to attack the first chance traveler. I could hear them piping shrilly at the crannies, and their whistling voices had, I confess, a secret charm for me. I knew they could not reach me with their frost-biting breath; and I unconsciously drew a bit nearer the fire, and wrapped myself more closely in the feeling of comfort I had drawn about me.

It was mid-afternoon; and the pale and lifeless sun threw itself across my floor more like a veritable shadow, than the cheerful sun it should have been.

I tried to lose myself entirely—to sleep; but that was impossible. My thoughts would not

wholly sleep. Yet they were, for all that, disposed to drowse.

Everything I had ever heard or read, seemed crowding in my memory. Chance sayings, from the lips of friends long dead; and quaint lines from quaintest authors. Old books sifted out their piquancies into my lap, that I should pick them up and examine them over again. My mind was, for the time, a crowded and illy-arranged museum. Every thing was huddled together with every thing else; yet not so confusedly as that I could not lay my hand—so to say—on any thing I wanted.

By some now unknown association, the line of Banquo, in his questioning of Macbeth respecting the appearance of the three witches, came to me; and I know not if I repeated it to myself aloud, in the state of reverie into which I was falling:

“The Earth has bubbles as the Water hath.”

At all events, the line kept running and spinning round in my brain, I all the while trying to draw out its secret meaning. And in time my thoughts began to weave themselves into a web, somewhat after this wise:—

— Bubbles!—yes, and a plenty of them, too!

The baby blows them from the bowl of a clay pipe, distending his little cheeks to their utmost,

and staring at the many tints that float over their surfaces, with a delight that is almost uncontrollable.

The youth blows them, when he looks out from one of the windows of his beautiful air-castle; and his eye swims with the pleasant prospect he sees through the golden mists that curtain his vision.

The man of maturer years blows them; but they are not always so gaily painted as those he inflated years ago. The colors have faded. They seem soiled. They are, in truth, wanting. Yet the bubbles are no less bubbles, although they look vapory and dull.

— And so, I thought, we all keep blowing bubbles,—from early babyhood, till we lean upon the staff. It is only when the silvery snows of old age lie thick upon the temples, and the clear eye has lost its crystal, that we cease from the occupation.

Early in life, we call it a pastime; when we grow older, we make it a business. While we are children, we send up the fragile creations into the air, and laugh and clap our hands to see the winds play with them as with liquid footballs; and when at last their thousand slender threads snap in sunder, and only a glistening water-drop falls to the earth, our faces momentarily forget their smiles, and straightway—we go to blowing more!

We get farther along in years. We are sanguine, even to feverishness. We hope for every thing which our minds conceive. We know of no such word as impossibility. Our blood is hot; it flies swiftly along our veins; and we know not how to brook restraint. Life is all pleasure; or rather, a concentric series of pleasures,—the outer circles quite as thickly crowded with happiness as those nearer the centre. We snatch quick glances at the future; and we see the years going round and round in these charmed circles, till the brain grows giddy. And then we give ourselves up to nothing but this single object and purpose.

We grow out of mere boyhood,—that uncertain age of conflicts between pride and reason,—that time wherein we experience more mortifications than during all the rest of our lives together,—and we feel the first flush of manhood on our brow. The limbs are lithe, and graceful, and strong. The senses take a secret pleasure in the simple consciousness of an existence. The eye is quick, and clear, and far-sighted. The ear catches the slightest sounds. A sense of strength, and so of confidence, settles steadily down over the whole being. There are no feats—whether physical or intellectual—for which we do not feel abundant capacity.

And the hopes, too, are so vaulting; and the ambition is so exalted; and the heart is so strong!

Oh! how *much* it would take of trial, to crush the strength out of the young heart now!

—— You are looking with an eye full of hopeful expression, out upon the wide highways of life. Crowded as they are, you have no fear of there being no room for you. You are so full of self-reliance,—to give it a no harsher name,—that you even presume to think the world is *in want* of your services; that it can ill do without you.

—— Immature fellow! you might die, and a thousand more of equal promise and hope might die with you,—and yet your loss would never be known. There would be no such general sorrow as you reckon upon. Enough, and more, would be left, to accomplish all you had in your heart resolved for yourself.

You think, as you pass on, that you will need the sympathy of another, from which, as from a never-failing fountain, to feed your own. You sometimes even now have moments of weariness and exhaustion, though they are as fleecy clouds in the breeze; yet they only suggest to you fears of weariness and exhaustion in the battle of the oncoming years, and you resolve not to be taken unawares.

At first, this is but a thought of expediency, or of something that looks as much to safety as to any thing else. Then it slowly and gradually takes

form. Then it thrusts its bursting grain above the heart-soil, and makes itself felt as an existence,—as a living reality. Then it germinates rapidly; drawing strongly on the life for sustenance, and sucking up almost all the invigorating juices from the heart.

You are thrown off your balance by the most trivial causes; nay, by no causes at all. Your nerves grow sadly out of tune. Your weak head swims on the slightest pretexts. Your heart feels never so lonely,—never so sadly in want of another's answering sympathies.

You have brothers? No—no. Sisters? Ah, but even *that* will not do. Something nearer even than brother, or sister, is what your heart-hunger craves now.

And all this time, silly fellow! your eyes are tightly shut and blindfolded. You see nothing. You are willing thus to grope in the dark. Yet if you would but exercise a little of the sober sense you have laid by, as of no use, in what a straightforward way would you go at your hidden purpose!

The sight of a pale ribbon, flirting in the wind, throws you in a panic. A smile from rich red lips fairly makes you go mad. The glance of a twinkling dark eye quite intoxicates you. How the hot blood rushes to your eyes,—and as quickly flies back again!

—— If you could but hear the music of her voice! ——

Ah, well,—and that happy time soon comes along. You have waited patiently and persistently. You have struggled valiantly with your bashfulness, until you are at last the victor. You *speaks* to her whose image has so long been haunting you. She replies. Her voice is like the blended tones of a lute.

—— Was there ever such delicious joy! ——

Again,—you feel the slight weight of her hand upon your arm. Yet you can hardly feel it, either. You wish she was heavier. You wish she was more of a burden on your arm.

The lace-frills on either side of her face are snow-white; but not so white as her face itself. Nothing could be whiter than that. You look at her, and wonder while you fear.

—— “Lean more on me for support,” you say.

She throws a grateful glance up at you; but says nothing. Yet you read, as plainly as if you had heard it, syllable by syllable,—

“Thank you; I lean on you now all I can.”

But how like a feather! How fragile! She leans on you with all her weight? Then she is scarce heavier than a shadow!

You try to speak cheering words. You tell her

what an effect balmy airs have on *your* senses, and try to make her confess that she is refreshed herself. The red rose that thrusts its head over the garden wall, you pluck for her, heedless of thorns and pain. You offer it to her. She lays it gently against her lips.

— Alas! how fearful the contrast with that blanched face! For the moment, yours is as white as her own!

You speak of flowers; but your lip quivers. You know that the flower upon your arm is too white for a rose; too pale by far for a lily; too fragile for an earth-flower: and you cannot keep it out of your mind, that she is to bloom in another soil.

— Oh God! how the rushing thoughts come! All your ambition—that powerful magnet that drew you down to the earth—has lost its efficacy now! The strong cords of your other earthly interests are suddenly snapped like threads. You could burn your books, and feel no regret,—if by that means these cruel fears would not clutch at your heart with their skinny fingers. You would freely give up your whole life-time,—day by day, and year by year,—if by such devotion you could crush the life out of these shapeless spectres.

— And then comes a long day; a dark day; a dismal day. No other such day was ever set

down in the calendar. The sun is clear,—but you do not see it shine. You are all in the darkness. The sweet south-winds blow upon your temples, and drift to your nostrils the aromas they have rifled from beds of flowers.

—— If *she* could but feel this fragrance in *her* nostrils! ——

You see many faces, and many strange ones. There are wild-briers running over the turf all around you, as you walk on; but no roses here; nothing but *thorns*.

Your eye is glassy; and it runs round unconsciously over the faces that are turned upon your own. Your muscles are so rigid, you think your face is all of marble.

There is a throng on your every hand; circles of young girls, but not a smile on the face of one. Their eyes are cast solemnly down, and you fancy their pale lips quiver. You look closer; and your own lips shake and tremble, in spite of you.

The dull tramp of feet is over. There is no sound—not a single voice. The silence is unbroken. It hangs over you—over those about you—over the whole dense throng, like a dark and heavy pall. You would put out your hand and raise it from before your eyes. You feel that the air is smothered; and you would fain speak aloud,

to satisfy yourself that you still retain the power of speech.

—— How heavy! How oppressive! How appalling! ——

By-and-by,—a low, faint, scarce audible sound rises near you; yet it seems as if it must be a great way off. Now louder—now higher—now nearer still to you.

It is the slow Dirge for the Dead!

—— How your flesh creeps, as the sad, wailing tones reach your ears! How icy cold is the blood in your veins,—and yet the beaded drops of perspiration stand upon your temples and in your palms! How you try to convince yourself that you still possess your senses,—and yet, in your deep agony, fiercely bite your lip almost through.

Alas,—what wo,—what untold wo! No heart now for your heart to beat against. No ear into which to pour the torrent of your grief. You cannot move from your tracks. You would not move, if you could. You would not speak; nor utter a cry. You would forever stand there, like a lifeless stock of marble.

You wonder if all the others feel as you do; and you try to lift your eyes to meet the gaze which you know is upon you. But just then comes another wail of music, and your eyes drop to the

ground. They behold what till now has been spared you.

They fall into a gaping grave.

— And then comes blindness again,—and a swift swimming of the brain,—and a sickening of all the senses; and you fear lest you may yourself reel and pitch into the newly-dug grave.

— Oh God!—if only this cup could have passed from your lips untasted! —

Four men stand at the mouth of the dread cavity. Their feet loosen the gravel that has been thrown out, and it rattles back again with a dull and deadened sound.

They each hold on tightly by a strap. It slips—you can distinctly hear it—through their hands. Down—down—down.

The slim coffin has disappeared below the edge of the grave. It grates and rumbles against the rough sides of its cell, and sinks down into the dead silence and darkness.

You hear sobs,—quick, convulsive, heart-rending sobs. They are full of distress. They come from a mother,—a sister,—a friend.

You cannot bear it yourself. Oh, for a single tear! Oh, for a single heaving of the breast!

— But no—but no. No one to whom to confide your griefs now; and they must fall back crushingly upon your heart. They seem to scorch

it with their lava. They press so hard upon you, that you feel fearfully self-possessed. It is dreadful.

The young girls step timidly up to the edge of the dark grave,—snatch a look at the motionless coffin that now holds all your heart,—and silently drop roses down upon it.

The sight touches you deeply; but no tears yet. What a blessed relief would they be!

And then you clench your hands tightly together, and bite your lip in fiercer agony. You spit blood profusely from your mouth.

Only a prayer,—a slow, solemn prayer from the reverend man of God,—and all is over. The dark throng begin to turn slowly away.

They are nearly all gone. They wait for you only.

Some one gently touches your arm; but you are as senseless as stone. Your eyes are fixed upon that dismal grave; the greedy grave that has swallowed up all your hopes of earthly happiness.

—— You only wish you could lie down and be buried forever there, too! ——

Then you think of her again, as she looked to you when she was in the flush of her youthful beauty. You remember well the very first glance she gave you. It will never, you think, pass out of memory. You call up all her tender expressions,—her genial thoughts,—and her arch and

graceful sayings. You remember how charming she looked to you, on a certain summer morning, when you were riding together along a road lined with ruddy apple-blossoms, and alive with the gushing melody of birds. You think, too, of the time when she gently laid her head against your manly shoulder, and your heart leaped, to know she loved none so truly as you.

And then to have the crushing thought fall like a great weight upon you, that this is all that is left to you of what your heart had so loved; and that even this is thus cast out of your sight, to be preyed upon by the worms!

—— Oh, for but a hot tear! How do you pray that this mighty grief will break its bounds, and overflow! ——

This time, they pull harder at your arm, and call you by name. You look up; but comprehend nothing. You hear your name spoken; but know not by whom.

They warn you, in affectionate words, to come away. You move on after them; but your last look is towards that greedy grave.

And you think you will come back there again when night steals over the place, and watch patiently by the side of it till she comes and sits down by you, when you will again weave fresh roses into garlands together.

— You are back in your snug room once more. You open a book—a huge book—and lay it upon the little-table before you. The events of the day you desire to make more real; and you bring them into close proximity with your daily duties,—with your very books,—with the large, clear type on the page.

Alas,—in only a brief moment they become *too* real for you! They roll rapidly and surgingly over your brain, like yeasty waves over a drowning man!

No ambition now: no more hope: no high thoughts for the future. You care nothing for the applauding voices of the world. They sound like faint whispers, by the side of your roaring and deafening troubles.

You pace from room to room; but still no consolation. All your castles, that you had builded with such nice care, have crumbled to the ground. All the domestic happiness you had thought at some future day to enter upon, has suddenly vanished from your vision. The home-fires you had thought to kindle so brightly on your hearth, are smothered and smouldering. Only dry ashes are before you;—no blaze;—no warmth. There is a vacant chair beside your own; but your eyes swim with tears, and you can see no further. You seize your hat and hasten away again to breathe out your

griefs upon the winds, hoping they may, perchance, waft them to her ears.

—— And this is your *first* disappointment; your first big trouble. Would to God—you say—it may be your last!

—— Bubbles! all bubbles!—thought I, as the wind shrieked mercilessly in the crevices of the old garret again. When do we stop blowing them?—and when do they stop bursting?

Now I thought I knew what Banquo meant, when he said that the Earth, like Water, had bubbles:——

“And *this* is of them.”

—— I piled fresh wood upon my fire. I felt chilled, as with the cold.

My eyes wandered out at the window. The sun no longer lay upon the carpet. It had gone down behind the distant hills. The swart shadows were at the casement, glimmering across the field of snow, and were even now creeping in.

—— They had come, I fancied, to fling the drapery of their sombre shroud about the thoughts that brooded here. And I gladly welcomed them too.

I buried my face in my hands, and felt a secret joy that the Night had finally come.

SUMMER RAIN.

TO some, a rainy day in summer is a bank of gloom, with not the edge of a bright vision thrusting itself through. It is so, either from the peculiarity of their organizations, or the doubled tediousness of their ordinary *ennui*. Sunshine has more to do with the happiness of such people than they would be willing to allow.

To others, and to myself—provided it is nowise related to an Equinoctial storm—a rainy day in Summer has a pleasure all its own. I would describe, if I could, the feeling of *homeness* that broods upon my heart, as I hear the rain driving against the window-panes, or rattling upon the dry shingles that roof the old garret in. It fills me with a secret joy, to hear it dripping—dripping—dripping from the eaves; or gurgling, and foaming, and roaring in the throats of the gutters. On the roof, it sounds like the clatter of ten thousand steeds of Nereus, and runs riot in ten thousand fancies through the brain.

I sit in my arm-chair, and watch them as they

pour through,—I mean the fancies. And strangely mixed with them are the pictures I behold on all sides. Out at the window, the distant fields show themselves, wet, soaking, bedraggled. A momentary desolation seems to have settled down upon them; yet to the heart that glows with faith, and with fancies, that are often next of kin,—it is no desolation at all.

Brooks, that had gone back to hide in their fountains, now are twisting and braiding themselves together all over the meadows. Little pools stretch across boggy and shallow places, and their surface breaks continually with the tinkle and patter of the falling rain. The grass, that had grown parched, and dried, and tawny in the biting heat, drinks in the rain at every pore, and looks refreshed and grateful. Oxen and cows stand patiently waiting in the barn-yards, their sides smoking as with heat. The freshly-opened furrows take deeper shades. The clover-buds exhale new fragrance on the air, reaching the nostrils. Leaves shiver with each breath of the changeful wind, or with the increased torrents of the rain.

Boys trudge homeward, wading with their bared legs in the roaring gutters; and they launch their mimic boats upon the treacherous tide, and shout lustily to each other as they see them swamped in the waters beyond their reach. Old women,—

housewives and simple-mannered maidens,—labor at the spinning-wheel, until its drowsy and monotonous buzz quite drowns the noise of the rain, and haunts the house with its recurring roll. And steadily beats the rain upon windows; and steadily it tinkles upon the crisp shingles; and steadily its moisture drives its grateful freshness into my heart.

Comfort, at such a time as this, is linked with a roof. It would be no comfort now, without shelter. In the old farm-houses, men collect in knots about the kitchens; or congregate in the corn-cribs, to talk over the prospects of the year; or ramble dreamily over the huge barns, as if their empty spaces were full of food for their own thoughts. Few, like myself, settle themselves cozily in the depths of their great chairs, and watch the sluggish passage of the hours with patience and hope.

And here, in this old chair, there is no better solace than a few well-thumbed and rare books. They are trustier than living companions to you. They meet the exact wants of the heart at this sombre time. Their very silence draws you to them like a magnet.

The man of taste sits down to his table, and selects them as the *bon vivant* makes choice of his wines. If you are full of mental humors, old Burton will cheer you to your heart's desire. He will take your ugly blue-devils, one by one, and dissect

them for you before your very eyes. If your mind is on the distant rifts and runnels, and you wish, as the school-boy happily expressed it, that it rained "too hard to go to school, but just about hard enough to go a fishing,"—then take up gentle Izaak Walton, and let your eyes slip slowly over his pleasant pages, till you fancy you are already in the fields where you wished to be,—strolling down beside the meadow-brooks,—watching the dancing wavelets,—growing drowsy with the whirr of the frogs,—and again become excited with the leap of a lively troutlet.

Or, if gentle and tender heart-histories please you better, and the surging of the rain against the windows makes you hug the arm-chair still closer,—read Ik Marvel; whose volatile pen has so livingly pictured heart-life on his pages, that you think you can almost behold the throbbings of the heart itself between the lines. Or, if romance is your choice, there are masters enough, and Scott, Dickens, and Cooper are among them. Or again, if your soul is satisfied with quiet and thoughtful reverie, and finds that sufficient to drive off leaden hypochondria from your thoughts, then betake yourself *within yourself*. You could hardly select a more congenial day for your purpose, though you went notching through the whole length of the calendar.

The noise of the rain is food for your fancies. A

delicious repose, more than half languor, broods in the silence in which your senses are lapped ; and it grows still more delicious with this sound of the falling, dripping, pouring, gushing rain. The heart turns to itself instinctively ; and the wealth that has so long lain hidden there, is all brought to light. Old memories swim in the brain, just as panoramas are unrolled on canvas. Long-forgotten faces pass again before the vision, as full of life, and vivacity, and expression, as if they were portraitures, hanging against the opposite wall. Old bits of chimney-corner tales on these days only are exhumed from the rubbish of memory ; and all the associations that hang about them like a golden veil, make indeed, for the time, a precious treasure-house of the heart. And if sadness settles down over all, it is not as a heavy pall, through whose folds the light does not come ; it is a gauzy veil,—a tinted atmosphere, through which the thoughts seem hallowed and delightful.

A Poetic fancy sees in the soft, still rains of Summer what plain minds fail to detect. The honest husbandman stands under his dripping trees, and runs his eyes over his pastures, his grain-fields, and his vegetable crops, anxious chiefly to measure his probable gain from the shower. It is all a matter of business to him. He sees profit and loss only. But the man of cultivated fancies, more than this.

“He can behold
Aquarius old
Walking the fenceless fields of air ;
And from each ample fold
Of the clouds about him rolled
Scattering everywhere
The showery rain,—
As the farmer scatters his grain.

“He can behold
Things manifold
That have not yet been wholly told,—
Have not been wholly sung nor said.
For his thought, that never stops,
Follows the water-drops
Down to the graves of the dead,
Down through chasms and gulfs profound,
To the dreary fountain-head
Of lakes and rivers under ground ;
And sees them, when the rain is done,
On the bridge of colors seven
Climbing up once more to heaven,
Opposite the setting sun.” —

If it be June, and you are a disciple of poetic old Walton, you will try the brooks, though the rain soaks you through and through. June, of all others, is the angler's month ; especially if you can catch a wet day, and the brooks rising. Cut the acquaintance of those prejudiced people who “tush” and “pish” at the healthy diversion, and come along.

Stroll down beside this harum-scarum little stream, hardly bigger than a thread itself, and

suffer your fly to dance over the tips of the wavelets on your way ; and as it takes their motion at length, let it stretch naturally out into the little basin below yonder rapids, or swim silently on the glassing water beneath the undermined bank beyond. Carefully—carefully!—as I live, a bright-eyed fellow has spied your lure, and his tail is set for the fatal spring! Therefore you will hold steadily for him. Let your line run itself well out. Infuse all confidence in him ; for if he doubts, he is lost to you.

What a leap! He has it now! He runs downward! Humor him a moment, for he is strong, and it will best repay you so. Now draw your prize. Aha! how your heart,—a moment ago so leaden and lumpy with your prejudiced ideas of fishing—how your heart throbs, and leaps, as if it would leap to your very throat! How swiftly your pulses play ; and what a wild excitement has suddenly flashed over you! You see him now, don't you? A couple of pounds! When the water parted for his exit, how fresh and bright looked his broad, white belly!—and what mottled colors, and iridescent streaks bedecked him!—how those spots of purple and gold beautified him from neck to tail!

— Is there no healthy excitement in this? None?—You know too well *what* it is, to falsify

now. You are excited as much as you can be already.—A waste of time, say you,—this angling in the silver brooks that lace the meadows? Not so; not so.

The sun has just come through the watery clouds, and the air is still full of sailing vapor. You can see the rain-drops still floating between yourself and the sun. The golden rays fall on a grass-tuft, and there you seat yourself for a few moments. Your eyes are filled with the most beautiful pictures. Your ears are saluted with the strains of a thousand singing birds, just broke out in melody. Here the little brook creeps stealthily out from the deep jungle of birch and hazel, and begins its babbling joy down through the meadow, as if glad at having escaped its sylvan confinement.

You may learn patience here. You may learn philosophy. You *must* learn purity, and simplicity, and truth, and love. The song of the brook shall drown out all the jangled discords that the evil world has crowded into your ears. Its pellucid stream shall wash your heart clean of all taint, and wicked thoughts. Any other than the holiest thoughts, upon this bank, you cannot admit to your soul. You cannot plot evil—you cannot harbor malice. For the time, your heart has become clear;—beating with a freedom never known to it be-

fore;—set in motion by impulses that grow stronger by that on which they feed.

— There breathes, too, such a calm over the air, —it must be of heaven. You are in a sweet dream ; but it is a waking dream, and therefore the fuller of joy. You go beyond yourself, and think of the Babel voices of the world away from you;—of those you left with the sweat of anxiety on their temples, and the furrows of care deepening on their brows ; of the thousand knotty perplexities that are woven to tangle your feet each morning, as you go through your chamber-door, and cling to you till you pillow your weary head at night ;—and then, from these distant, but real, scenes—as if you had a fairy’s gift—you betake yourself again to the fresh and green meadows ; to the gliding brook ; to the noisy chorus of the gleeful little waves ; to the sleepy whirr of the hermit frog, in the pool close by ; to the occasional splash of the trout, leaping for his prey ; and to the dreamy, misty quiet that settles itself all around you.—Have you not profited,—nay, have you not grown *rich*, by the contrast, in your heart ? Call you *this* a wastefulness of time ? If yes,—then are you poor indeed. If no,—then throw rod across your shoulder often. Learn to love angling, and you will so unlearn much that has weighed hardly upon you. It

is out of question, that a true and devoted follower of Izaak Walton, who wets his lines and fills his creels with a simple heart, should be a thoroughly base or bad man.

— Alack! that the whole line of the rainy days of Summer might be marshaled in my memory again! So much genial pleasure was in them. So little did the spirit suffer itself to chafe. Such healthful influences then took root, perhaps for being then so well watered.

Whenever these days overtake me, I am given to make the most of them; whether alone in my snug and dry room in the old garret-corner; or journeying by forced marches with others in jolting coaches; or doomed to do penance for my presumption in traveling, by being immured all day with a few rusty and drizzling loungers, in an old-fashioned, low-roofed country-inn.

THE AUTUMN TINTS.

LIKE a huge beaker, filled with dazzling dyes
L seems the vast amphitheatre around me. On
all sides are wooded heights, crowned with the
clear skies of Autumn.

There is an untold glory in the woods, as if some
lavish hand had overlaid them with rich cloths of
gold, wrought after rarest patterns of broidery,
and fringed with skilful combinations of every
color known.

It is the great HARVEST HOME of America.

All the fruits are being gathered in. The broad
plains are golden with the slender ears of the yel-
low maize, and red with the bending stalks of
buckwheat. Laden wains go creaking down
through well-worn cart-paths, and roguish and joy-
ous boys sit upon their tops, rolling about the yel-
low pumpkins, or husking the golden corn. Old
barn-floors are strewn with the ruddy and ripened
fruits, and generous granaries are filled to bursting
with the products of the fields. Merry laughter
rings on the still air, and mingled echoes of boys,

men, and dogs, come up from over the far-reaching plain into these solemn woods.

It is as if some grand pageant were passing; or all nature were busy about some high revel; or every tree, and shrub, and vine, had joined in celebrating a gay masquerade.

The ash and the maple,—the chestnut and the oak,—the linden and the aspen,—the birch and the beech,—the walnuts and the elms,—the vines and the creepers,—are all out to-day in their holiday attire, to celebrate the completion of the rolling year. Scarlet and crimson, yellow and orange,—purple and red,—silver and gold,—cherry and lake,—vermilion, and pink, and green,—all these tints display themselves in the sheen of the slanting sun, crowding, commingling, and melting; varying ever, and grotesquely combining; and again blazing, and flashing, and flaring, each above the other, until it seems as if all the hill-sides were in a glow of many fires.

But a few days since, only a few isolated maples, planted on the outskirts of the woods, and seemingly half inclined to leave their old companions entirely for the lowlier life of the plain, had arrayed themselves in these fanciful colors of Autumn; as if, forsooth, they were but faithful sentinels,—outposts from the main body, whose part it was to give early notice of the approach of the Spirit of

Autumn, as she trailed across the meadows and over the uplands. But there came a sharper frost, breathing its strange breath over all the leaves of the forest, and lo!—how wonderful the sudden change! The trees are transmuted into glowing pictures. How incomprehensible the process!—yet how inexpressibly gorgeous the effect!

Erecting their glittering crests one above another, and throwing out their broad arms as far as they will reach from their bodies, the crowding trees are at this moment glowing with splendor.

It is as if a million banners were hung from the outer walls of some high battlement, and all were slowly waving and sailing in the gay and gladsome wind. It is as if a million shields, all of burnished silver and gold, were clattering in the gusty onsets of the breeze, and reflecting back again the myriad shining lances shot from the rays of the warm sun. It is as if flags and streamers were everywhere trailing, and everywhere waving, and everywhere dancing and glancing in the sunlight; as if some generous spirit of the air had gathered up all the hues and tints of the whole year, and wrought them into all the rich and fantastic forms imaginable; as if a great army were silently ranged around me, decked in the most gorgeous trappings that wealth and ambition could supply. Nay, rather than all, it is as if all the gods and goddesses of

the seasons had met together, each contributing something to the beauty and brilliancy of the famous show.

The woods in Autumn, when this matchless variety of colorings is upon them, are more alluring than at any other season of the year. At no other time is there such softness in the atmosphere, inviting so soothing a dreaminess, and lulling the soul into such repose; even as the senses are soothed by the balmy blowing of south winds.

Never does one behold such indescribable skies,—whose depths seem like pearl,—color after color, and tint after tint, melting imperceptibly into the liquid, stainless azure beyond. And to enhance this dreamy beauty, as well as to subdue still more effectually the feelings, an unseen hand has flung over all a gauzy veil; so hazy, so much more light and airy than gossamer itself, as to half bewilder the eye of the beholder, and make him believe he is in reality transported to other lands,—the lands of fable and story.

— So wonderful a change in the hues of the foliage, will not fail to interest one, even if considered in detail. These masses of rich coloring will lose none of their bewildering effect in the beholder's eye, if they are regarded separately, or in single groups.

First and foremost of all, in point of variegated and vivid beauty, is the maple. Of this tree there are two species,—the soft, and the rock, or sugar maple. The leaves of the former, are of a brilliant scarlet, from the highest to the lowest cluster; while those of the latter, are but an unbroken field of gold. At another time, the one is crimson, while the other is a bright red. Again, the one flaunts a variety of tints, such as a glomeration of yellow and green, pink and red; while the other is delicately shaded with purple hues, more rich and rare than the Tyrian dyes of world-wide renown. Then there stand others,—whether of the soft or rock species—whose leaf-laden branches combine all these colors indiscriminately; as if the hand that distributed them, were far more ambitious of prodigality, than of artistic refinement and exactness of distribution.

The chestnuts are vast sheets of gold; and they rear their crests as proudly, as if they felt that all their ephemeral drapery was gold itself in very truth. They resemble lofty columns, glistening afar off in the unbroken sunlight.

The oaks are, some of them, at times yellow, yet they more generally dye their robust leaves in a deep scarlet, looking as if their sturdy branches were alive with flames of fire.

Purest silver on the branches of the aspen tree, contrasts beautifully with the glare of gold upon its round, smooth leaves.

The linden tree wears a livery of pure orange. It looks as if it might be the footman to some of its more wealthy and proud neighbors.

Peculiar tinges of yellow have touched the leaves of the ashes,—the walnuts,—the birches,—and the elms. Sometimes they look like gold; and again they grow pale by immediate contrast with the neighboring chestnuts. Sometimes, too, there are hues of delicate purple upon many of the ashes, that set charmingly upon the more vivid colors that generally form their background.

The Virginia creeper—a vine quite common in our woods—has its leaves tipped with a brilliant cherry-color.

The dogwood is enveloped in a robe, in color approaching to lake.

The pepperidge, or black-gum tree, wears a suit that is almost, if not quite, purple.

The sumach, with its long branches of red berries thrusting themselves through to the sun, dons a robe of the brightest scarlet.

The locusts and sycamores are usually a dull yellow; presenting no attractions, as individuals, to the roving eye, yet never opposing the obstacle of an unpleasant contrast to any of the vivid tints

that employ their wealth in this great Autumnal drapery of the forest.

The poplar is likewise of a pale yellow, as is also the willow, whose leaf was but lately shining underneath with fibrous silver.

From my position, I readily discover that the tints of those trees nearest me are best defined, and creative of the most vivid impressions; yet, as my eye gathers in the scene, little by little, and wanders dreamily back over the leaves that throng by millions upon the higher grounds,—although I am not able to get such distinct and definite impressions, I am quite as much dazzled and bewildered with the rare combinations of the various masses.

If the colors are brighter in the foreground, the tone melts and grows subdued as my eye recedes farther; until, in the most distant backgrounds, a blending of tints fairly blazes upon my vision, whose individual beauties and characteristics it is beyond human power properly to describe. And it is this view of *the whole scene*, that properly produces its effect on the human feelings. It is this crowded sense of a full and fervid glory, that overcomes the ordinary mind, and defies all the bounds that have been studiously set to the dullest imaginations.

—— Walk farther into the woods.

You feel at once a strange sensation. You fancy

that some new spirit rules in the air, and charms the saddened insect-voices that you hear. You have a sense—though by no means an oppressive one—of the presence of some mysterious power that broods in your thoughts, and steals imperceptibly over your whole soul. It is nothing more than the ordinary influence that ever haunts the solemn Autumn Woods.

As you walk slowly on, you discover the nice exactness with which Nature has dyed every leaf. Not one seems to have been overlooked, or forgotten. Even the tenderest shoots of the beech and the maple, fling out as gaudy banners as the lofty trunks they may some day come to emulate. The creeper wreathes the trees, just as affectionate rose-vines cling to painted pilasters; and its leaves are variegated with every shade of coloring. Deep within some cloistered recess, the vine of the wild-grape runs in all its untrained luxuriance; and the purple cheeks of its clustering fruit tell too plainly, that the frost never forgot, while on its other errand, to bestow on them a wanton kiss.

What a place, of all others, to sit and dream, is such a moss-cushioned rock as the one exactly before us! How delicious are the airs that bathe your brow! How full seems every thought,—how burning every fancy,—how sweetly saddened every memory! What mellow floods of light let them-

selves down through the painted leaves upon the mosses at your feet,—even as the sun-set streams through stained windows into the aisles and arches of some old cathedral! What a holy hush broods in the whole atmosphere; embalming your dreamy fancies in a misty halo, that will wreath itself closely about them forever!

— In my wanderings through the long aisles and alleys of these woods, I fall in with some sluggish pond, or pool, whose silvered surface is beginning to be laden with the leaves that have thus early fallen from their stems. They mottle it with a gay beauty. There are the red, the green, the purple,—the scarlet, the crimson, the pink, the yellow, and the gold,—all sailing upon the liquid surface that is soon to become their crystal coffin-lid. Some of them seem still to bear themselves proudly on the lakelet's bosom; as if they were gay argosies, freighted with the glittering wealth gathered from the quest of some golden fleece.

The squirrels, red and gray, are racing about me in full fervor of excitement, their capacious cheeks distended with liberal loads of corn, gathered on a recent predatory excursion. They fly from limb to limb, and from tree to tree, as if they were made to walk the air itself, in their swift journeys.

The jays are keeping up their music among the trees; and the old crows are hoarsely cawing in the

distance. There are the voices of many insects around me, among which sounds distinctly the friendly chirp of the little crickets.

—— These woods!—oh, these solemn woods!

It cannot be in their *tints* alone, that I find so many endeared associations.

It cannot be alone in their solemn grandeur, that I find material out of which to weave such quaint and charming fancies.

It is not in any one of their peculiar charms—peculiar to the autumnal season—that I find the invisible, yet irresistible guidance of these delicious influences.

But it is in *all* these combined,—in the bewildering tapestries flung over the trees, in the soft and genial sunshine, in the gauzy veil that is draped about the woods and over the plains, in the dreamy atmosphere,—that the Spirit of Autumn exhibits herself, and exerts her mysterious influences.

I love to stroll through the long lanes, and roam across the old pastures, on such days as this. At every forward step, my eye is enchanted with some novel union of colors,—some new form of beauty. The lanes, on either side, are crowded with maples and beeches, some of which present solid masses of gold, and others of the most vivid crimson. Wild vines drape the gray old walls with the wealth of their tints, making them appear as if

huge and costly embroideries had been lavishly flung over them. Even the diminutive bushes that skirt the edges of the lanes and pastures, have changed their native colors into a not unpleasing red, ambitious to appear like all the rest of inanimate nature in the season of this gay carnival. The wild blackberry and raspberry vines likewise wear liveries of a red ground, yet variegated and adorned with the admixture of other hues.

From the entrance to these pastures my vision stretches over a large and beautiful expanse of country. I see the harvesters, busy in the distant buckwheat and maize-fields, and hear the many merry sounds by which they testify their deep joy for the season. From this point, the view of the far-off woods seems more magnificent than ever. Such a harmonious blending of so many colors,—such undying brilliancy to the whole pageant,—such a filmy veil, drawn lightly between myself and all else beyond,—such a yellow and genial sunshine,—what *can* be more enchanting than are all these?

Even if these holy days of the Autumn Time do so imperceptibly generate a feeling of sadness, it is a sadness that always brings along with it its own pleasure. The thoughts, and feelings, and emotions, are all insensibly etherealized, in the midst of these quiet influences; and impulses, that

but a brief time ago were fullest of selfishness and pride, are baptized now in the flood of an atmosphere that gives a purer and a healthier life to the soul.

The *sweetness* of this sadness, of which all sensitive hearts are full at this season, must be the fruit of the placid joy raised by such glorious sights upon a vast landscape. The gay colorings,—

“Brighter than brightest silks of Samarcand,”—

reflect their own peculiar light upon the heart that is rightly attuned. The genial sunlight warms it into a healthy, yet subdued fervor. The hazy atmosphere bathes it in purest airs, expelling or choking entirely the fogs that long have blinded it to its true enjoyment.

— These, and the like of these, are the pleasures—both outward and inward—that cluster about these charming Autumn days. They are pleasures, too, none are licensed to enjoy so much as they who are ardent lovers of Nature in all her forms; they who keep their hearts simple and undefiled; they who turn oftenest within themselves for their truest happiness; and they who see in all this pomp and splendid array, only the profuse handiwork of a great God over all.

— To the woods—to the woods, then, ye deni-

zens of pent-up cities, who never draw in fresh breaths of unadulterated air, or bare your brows to the holy influences of the woodland winds! Fling down book and pen! Fling away note-books and huge ledgers! Break the strong fetters of social exaction and social pride, as if they were only green withes about your feelings,—and away to the gorgeous woods during this unsurpassedly brilliant festival! Join heartily in the grand triumph of Nature! Shout, and sing, and make merry, for this season of the great Harvest Home! Lift up your voices to the very skies, till they penetrate to the empyrean itself! For this is the thanksgiving of the year;—the showy pageant, whose equal is not in any of the carnivals that earth's inhabitants unite to celebrate.

THE FIRST SNOW.

YOU wake in the morning,—thrust aside the window-curtain,—rub your eyes, as if you might be deceived,—and take another look.—
SNOW!

Yes,—Winter at length is here. It fills your heart with strange feelings, and you muse pleasantly as you continue to gaze.

The walks in the yard are covered with the whiteness, till they are buried out of sight altogether. The sills are heaped. The tops of the fences are coated, in long, high, and narrow ridges. Caps of fleecy snow are upon the posts, and they like ancient hussars, with white caps and frosty beards. Everything out of doors is dressed in masquerade. And all this has been done in a single night, while you have been sleeping. Only yester evening, when you last looked out at your chamber-window, the ground was bare, and dark, and cheerless; the wagon-wheels rumbled heavily over the frozen hobbles: the sky was gray, and dark, and full of gloom. But now, a magic power has

changed all. You think you must have made some fairy journey during the night, and that a new realm spreads out before your vision now. And you look out upon the snowy waste with as much delight as when you were a child of but a half dozen years, and shouted gayly at the First Snow in the early morning.

How still is the air! If voices, or echoes, reach you, they have a smothered sound. The snow is still falling. It has been steadily falling all the night. The white flakes have descended on the roof like angels, with their blessings. They have thrown a white cloak over the whole—ridge-pole, gables, and dormer-windows. Every thing looks so fantastic! You imagine that Nature has got a new freak in her head, and will never be done with putting off and on her fine dresses.

The bushes about the door and the yard hang heavily with the fleecy fruitage of the night. Upon the fir-trees large masses of the snow have fallen, and the boughs bend far downward with their weight. The lawn looks no longer desolate; and the garden does not seem so mournful, with the naked bushes and dried vines scattered over it: all is spotless,—and fair,—and pure. You think of washed wool; but it bears no sort of comparison that is adequate. Never was there seen another earthly fleece so white as this.

The round rails about the door-yard are heaped high with the soft snow; and the old gate-bars at yonder pasture are almost hidden; and the barn-roof,—and the sheds,—and the well-curb,—and the dovecote, are all buried up. A stack of hay that stands out in the lot near the barn, looks as smooth and regular as a cone; and the banded ricks of corn, for which the barn had no room, are standing about like white tents pitched on a spotless field. The snow is piled and crowded upon the edges of the eaves, as if to see how much could hold itself safely there. There is the old cart, got ready for the mill the night before, now looking like a huge drift. Nothing of it is visible. The well is covered up, and you could find it only by the early morning tracks that have been made to it. Logs at the great wood-pile are now as smooth as need be,—the knots, and gaps, and corners all rounded off and filled up. The axe is buried; and a white line shows you where the handle is. The grindstone is out of sight. Fowls venture beyond the sill of their homestead, and slump in to their heads. They make a second trial, and it is the same; a third, and it is still worse; and at last they flap their wings in flight, rise above the snow-banks, and fly with a loud screech and cackle to the shed that protects the back door. The crow of chanticleer

from his roost is muffled and solemn; you fancy it might portend the dawn of some dreadful day.

The old horse looks out over the scene through the window near his stall, neighing for human company. And the cattle low loudly in their stanchions, as if they knew that some wonderful change had taken place out of doors. The patient cows, overfed in their warm range of stalls, stand waiting for the milk-maid; who would long ago have filled her brass-girt pails of maple with their frothy milk, if she could have found a path through the snow-depths to the barn.

At last the cottage-fires are made. You know it by the blue smoke that curls up above the chimneys. You know it by the noises of the children, who have just awaked to the excitement of the new scene. They romp from chamber to chamber, calling on each other to look at it out of *this* window, and then out of *this*. They have a hundred "ohs!" to utter with all the views of it they get. Their screams are heard through all the rooms, and rise to the old garret-rafters. They tap at my door, and cry out—"Get up! get up, and see the snow!"

And Betty comes up after them presently, and gets them into something like what she styles "order," and trundles them off one by one, still shouting to each other about the snow, down stairs. All the way they do but cry—"See the snow! see

the snow !” In the old breakfast-room, their chubby faces are flattened at once against all the lower panes of each window. And the fire begins to blaze and roar in the deep throat of the chimney ; and the flames glisten and dance in the breasts of the great brass fire-dogs ; and steams of all flavors rise from the white-spread table, suggesting to the appetite thoughts of a warm breakfast, and much comfort thereat and thereafter. Old and young gather round the table. The white-haired grand-sire asks the blessing of Heaven, with his shriveled hand uplifted. Grandmamma, in her trim lace cap, wears a sweet smile on her sainted face. And the bright-eyed youngers throw alternate glances of delight upon the welcome table and the deepening snow. And tongues begin to run ; and voices to mix and mingle in a pleasant confusion ; and laughter to rise among all ; and kind and thoughtful words are said at the board for the poor.

All the day, I sit in my snug apartment in the garret, and watch the falling of the feathery snow. At first, it sifts down in fine showers, powdering every object and every space that had not been powdered before. Then as the light grows whiter and brighter in the sky, and the pale sun struggles to break through the storm-banks in the air, the flakes are larger ; and fall irregularly ; and sail unsteadily on their way down ; and reel, and pitch,

and stagger, and sink at last in the soft bed of down below. The little snow-birds flutter in flocks about the yard and garden, alighting in fear on the currant bushes, or dancing, like humming-birds, around the dried bean-vines. Paths are broken about the house, and men turn out with teams down the banked-up road. The old well-sweep creaks again, and the axe is heard bluntly at the wood-pile. The cattle make the range of the barn-yard, and the spotless snow there is soon trampled and besmirched. On the barn-floor the flail thumps steadily, whipping out the smooth grain from the bearded head. Corn-huskers laugh and sing over their task in the liberal crib, and the golden grain is shelled out into huge troughs and wooden trays. Deep-toned bells ring from the stables, betraying the impatience of boys, and making snatches of melodious music in the frosty morning air. The earth itself is covered with a robe of beauty; and all hearts grow glad with the new Spirit that has come silently down with the snow.

Looking out at my window, with a comfortable fire of clean ash and hickory blazing on the narrow hearth, I look far into the long Winter that is before me. Nay,—I see a long train of Winters, and let my eyes wander down their snowy vistas. Joys that are not yet born, rise to my thoughts. Hearths that have not been peopled by their magical

circles for many a month, are now hemmed in with life again. Chimneys, from whose tops smokes have not for a long time ascended, are wreathed with white and blue clouds once more. I go over country wastes, where cold winds howl like wild beasts; and into dreary and leaf-shorn woods, whose skinny arms wave and toss to and fro in the tempests; and upon steel-surfaced rivers, ringing with the bright blades beneath the skaters' feet; and around lowly cabins, where children are crying with the cold, and begging for food, and mothers are feeding them with hopes instead of bread, and groaning in their hearts for the dawn of brighter days; and through spacious parlors, crowded with beauty, and gleaming with dancing lights; and into cribbed little studies, where scholars are laboring as others cannot labor; and through spacious kitchens, steaming and smoking with good fare for hungered stomachs; and into silent rooms, closely curtained, with slumbering fires, and dim sunlight dawning in, and pale faces on the white pillows, and cups and phials half full of colored liquids on little stands.

This First Snow has drawn the white curtain of Winter closely about me. A feeling of homeness has fallen newly on my heart. I look back without a regretful memory to the ended Summer, and think of its braided brooks, and glistening grass, and rolling

lawns, and welcome shades; but all of them cannot extort from me a sigh. They are gone. The heaped snow has buried them, and the little brooks make muffled music beneath the bridging ice. They give me constant joys by their remembrances. I know that when the returning suns shall have lifted off this fleecy veil and dissolved these crystal bands of ice, they will all come back again, bringing with them the birds and the flowers. The Winter offers its ample stores of pleasure now. Its granary is full of joys. I shall find them, sitting here by my little hearth, while I look into the leaping flames, or lose myself in the dreams that sleep in the crumbling white ashes. They will come to me as I look out at the window, and watch the limited daily life of the cows, and the fowls, and the doves wheeling in constant circuits about the old barn-roof. They will return to me in the jangling rhymes of the musical snow-bells, and in the mingling of merry voices among loads of huge furs. I shall taste them in the glad circles about great fires, when the walnut and ash logs are blazing and glowing on wide hearths, and old tales are told in the dusky corners, and nuts and "apple-jack" go round with a joke. And they will come closer still to my heart, while I sit in the corner-room of the old garret and hear the white snows sift on the roof, and let my thoughts go out freely

into the stillness, and play with the fancies that flock to me in the gloom.

The old times come back to life again in the Winter. The heart then broods tenderly over the past. Snow-fields, against which the weak sun vainly falls, recall the sheeted forms,—the lonely graves,—and the pale headstones. I watch the marks of the sun upon the floor, and think how soon the hand may stop on the dial of my own life; and I earnestly hope the old friends will then know me again.

The bared branches of the trees that bend with such ghostly motions, are constantly wailing and harping laments; and the driving winds are racing and scurrying like released spirits across the glistening snow-crusts; and eaves stop their steady dripping; and the fairy frost-palaces, and armies, and Gorgons are entire upon the window-panes;—but the heart does not yet grow cold. Nay, its warm life is rather quickened. It feeds now more upon itself. Its wealth grows instantly greater. Its rich resources expand. And the deep and patient love of one other heart, beating and hoping only with your own, makes this still Winter-life all the more earnest, and truthful, and glad.

The books that lie scattered over the table before you, are now but so many living friends. The compressing influences of Winter have given them a new worth, making them speak to your heart in

strangely dear and familiar voices. The dog that curls himself on the thick rug at your feet, seems to plead with you for fellowship, through his up-turned eyes. The very pictures on your low walls are clothed upon with the colors of a new being; and you read histories in their looks.

All this crowds upon me, as I gaze out upon this First Snow. The joys—the hopes—the comforts—the charities,—they march before me in a stately line. I think that Winter has full as many delights as the other seasons; and that they are far deeper, and broader, and larger, because they seem to press so much closer about the heart. I call up the many home-stories that cluster in the chimney-corners; the crystal echoes that have slept so long in the high rooms of the old mansion; the bright faces that were wont to be lit up with contagious smiles and the flames on the hearth; the moonlit nights, when steel-shod runners glance over the crisp snow, and smothered voices make confusion beneath bear-skins and buffalo-robcs; and long tables, with rows of gleaming eyes on either side:—and my heart dances and bounds with exultation. I think there is nothing but joy in the Winter. Even its gloom is flooded with a living light. The sparkles of feeling shine out through its darkest hours, just as phosphoric fires dance in the waters during the night-watches on the ocean.

Yes,—I am glad that the Winter at last has come!

THE FIRE FIENDS.

AT first, it was only a stifled cry, as of a person in distress.

The winds of Winter were dashing in swift squadrons down the street; twisting off loose blinds; slamming insecure shutters; puffing out sleepy lights in dingy lanterns; and then scurrying away to the deserted mole that stretched far out into the frozen harbor.

The din of rattling wheels and tramping feet had long ago died out. Only the mad screech of the changing winds, or the clatter of the crazy blinds and shutters, broke the dismal silence.

The lights in all the houses of the street were out; and the feeble rays from the sleepy lanterns scarce revealed the outward shape of the buildings on which they fell.

The distant clock had clanged the hour of midnight from its lonely watch-tower, and the echoes of its iron tongue had hardly broken in the strange angles and crannies of the grotesque roofs.

— The cry sounded as if it came from a heart

smitten with deep terror, and had spent half its strength in its passage over livid lips.

"Fire! Fire! Fire!"

It was so faint, one could hardly distinguish the fearful syllable; yet it was so distinct, that it curdled the swift blood in the veins.

— Again it came. This time, louder. This time, higher. This time, more deep and voluminous:—

"Fire! *Fire!* FIRE!"

There was no mistaking that cry then. A hundred strong men caught it up, and a hundred strong throats poured it out on the midnight air. A single bell rang the alarm to the immediate neighborhood, and instantly a score of bells caught the fearful tone. The air above the gables and roofs was peopled with voices of fear; and the close and narrow streets below were alive with echoes of alarm. Bells and voices both shouted lustily in the midnight—

"*Fire! Fire! Fire!*"

The street was filled and blocked with people. A passage through it was, for the time, impossible, for its narrow throat was choked up. Every body was tossing his arms. Every one was screaming, and shouting, and ordering, and entreating, at the top of his voice. The place looked like a Pandemonium let loose; every man a mad devil, whose

features the lurid fires lit up with a ghastly and unearthly gleam.

The building was of wood, and stained with the beating storms of years. On either side were similar structures, united closely with this. Doom seemed to have settled down, in the thick smoke-cloud, over each one of them.

— The mad fires spouted out through the sashes of the windows; while the glass melted as by magic, and run down upon the walk in a silver flood. They thrust their fearful forms far out into the street, quite over the heads of the swaying crowd; as if they would storm the barrack of wooden buildings on the other side. Then they wrestled themselves, like furious Gorgons, into entangling knots, and spiral forms; and lifted their undulant bodies up into the dark midnight sky. And their hot breaths were poured out upon the street air, almost stifling the terror-stricken mass that fell back before them.

In an upper room a young child was still sleeping. Her window opened out upon the roof, whose dry shingles were already crackling in the hungry jaws of the Fire Fiends. She had not yet waked, but lay on her couch, blissfully, yet frightfully, ignorant of the demons that were on her track.

A single whiff of the changing wind, and the fire fiends had mounted to the roof. Running

swiftly along the moss-speckled eaves, they crept slowly, but surely, up the declivous roof,—laying hold firmly by each row of shingles,—and finally, pausing at the window of the child's bed-chamber. They climbed up at the window-sill, and looked in!

— The picture of Innocence should have made their lurid faces pale before it.

But no!—but no! The flames glared gleefully in at each pane, growing bolder with the view. They licked their hungry tongues, as if in sweet foretaste of the delicious morsel that was theirs. They gazed at their victim through a hundred jealous and fiery eyes, as if by some mishap she might be stolen from them. They wreathed the sill—the casement—the little gable,—like a vine all of bright fire, and luxuriant with flaming foliage. They clapped their hundred red hands above their heads, and screeched, and yelled, and hissed, in their great glee.

— “*My child! Save my child!*”

It was a wild cry of agony from one in the dense crowd below. The shriek of the woman's voice rose high above the din of men and flames. It pierced the thick smoke-cloud, and reached the very room in which the child lay. And the jubilant Fire-Fiends caught the wild echo, and answered it with hissing, hellish laughter.

— The cry rose again,—and again. The agonized mother could do no more. She sank lifeless to the ground.

They lifted long ladders to the windows, and brave men mounted to the topmost rounds. But they could advance no farther. A wall of fire kept them out at the door. A sheet of flame threatened to enwrap them from the roof. There was no advance. The room could not be reached.

Meantime the glass in the window of the child's bed-chamber fell tinkling on the floor, and the hot breath of the flames awakened her. She bounded into the middle of the room, and stared wildly around her. She was as rigid as a statue of marble.

In another moment, she had opened the door that conducted down the stairs. But she as quickly shut it again. The stairway was a bank of living flames. Fires were roaring and seething on every side. The legions of the fiends hemmed her completely in. Neither through the window, nor through the door, could she make her escape. And she stood like a statue there, gazing in mute agony at the death she knew was inevitable.

A ghostly pallor overspread her face. Her auburn tresses were strewn carelessly over her shoulders of ivory. Her blue eyes were set in her head, and all the time glaring at the fire. Her

little frame shook like an aspen leaf. Her hands were tightly clenched, and immovable at her side.

The flames threw out their forked tongues at her through the window, and winked and blinked fiercely with their hellish eyes. They wreathed themselves into all manner of fantastic figures; and played,—and wrestled,—and danced,—and writhed,—like serpents together, as if to delight her in her greatest terror. They surged upwards like huge billows, and their crests threw off a row of a million glittering sparks. Then they sunk down to the window again, and looked in at the casement. They clapt their palms over and over again. They continued to thrust out their horridly sibilant tongues. They screeched; they yelled; they roared; they hissed; they sang.

Then they beckoned to each other hurriedly, and poured into the room. They formed a circle about the child, joining their fiery hands. They danced around her, and yelled in their excess of joy. They rose to her breast, each moment pressing more closely upon her form. They breathed upon her fair shoulders; and she quaked and shivered with fear. They blew a hot breath upon her cheeks; and she gasped for life.

Then they retreated again for a moment; but it was only to return with freshly whetted appetites. They kissed her neck. They laid their tongues

upon her lips. They dallied with her beautiful ringlets, as if they were braiding them up with bands of fire. They enfolded her at once in their embrace, and fell gluttonously upon her. She sank down upon the floor.

—— The roof fell to the cellar, and a legion of sparks flew up to the sky.

Morning came. Hundreds of men were searching among the ruins.

—— Only a handful of white bones lay piled up together!

The mother was a maniac.

OLD COUNTRY INNS.

THERE is a charm in the atmosphere that hangs about them, and there always will be. Tenanted as they now-a-days chiefly are, by a coterie of village loafers, worn-out whips, male gossips, and seedy coats,—they are nevertheless fruitfully suggestive of times when congenial intellects were wont to congregate within them, and sunny hours were notched off on the day's calendar in their now deserted rooms.

An old Tavern—nestled down in the hollow of New-England hills; its dimmed sign-board swinging and creaking in the wind, as it swung and creaked full fifty years ago;—to a mind of the least sensibility is suggestive of the pleasantest of memories.

You see the expected daily coach, rolling and rattling down the dusty road; its horses eagerly pressing on to their coveted stables; its passengers thrusting out their uncovered heads, to see if they can catch a view of their next stopping-place; and the companionable driver exerting himself to im-

press beholders with the idea of his superior qualities on the box. People group about the Inn-door, anxious to catch the earliest syllables of the news, and inquisitively studying the faces and figures of the freshly arrived passengers. Knots of boys,—all looking anxiously at the driver on his lofty perch, and many of whom strive to clamber up the wheels to the iron-railed roof,—stare at the passengers with eyes distended with wonder, as they dismount, and exchange words with each other in low tones respecting the appearance of each one of the travelers.

If it be evening, or towards evening,—especially the evening of a rainy day,—a stage-coach arrival to a loiterer at one of these old Inns, is absolutely refreshing. Experienced travelers will freely bear me out in this assertion.

What, to a wearied man, who has been trundling over hills and plains, and through deep cuts and valleys, all the day long, brings a greater store of pleasant visions than the thought of reaching—just at dreary nightfall—the opened tavern-door,—of dismounting,—of enjoying an agreeable meal, and a subsequent night of comfort and untroubled dreams? What a golden atmosphere seems to hang around the spot where such pleasing visions originate! What a look of pure, domestic comfort gleams from the blazing logs in the fire-place,—

from the ruddy fire-dogs,—and from the reddening panes in the windows! How suggestive is the contented face of the waiting-maid of good cheer, kind care, and sincere welcome! How delightfully and dreamily curls the blue smoke from newly kindled fires above chimney and roof!

And if it be just at nightfall of a rainy, dismal, suicidal day, when blue-devils bestride a man's imagination, and the murkiness of the clouds answers but tolerably well to the murkiness of the cheerless traveler's brains,—how doubly grateful becomes the glimpse of one of these old resting-places! The current of one's thoughts sets at once in a different channel. An oppressive load is suddenly taken off the weighed-down heart. The spirits begin to bound with a fresh elasticity. The eye kindles again with a blaze of momentary enthusiasm.

Alas for the good old days of stage coaches!—those days of unaffected sociability for travelers; of unmolested enjoyment on long journeys; of undivided comfort at the resting-places,—they are all gone forever! The ancient roads are all grown over with broad belts of grass, where but so lately were rattling the coach's lumbering wheels. Vines still climb over the moss-covered walls,—and prim-roses still dot the green sward by the roadside,—and hay-cocks stand thickly over the adjoining

fields; but the old stage-coaches roll by them all no more. Smiling-faced travelers have ceased gazing over beautiful landscapes; nor do young children in their arms refresh themselves with thick-coming breaths of the pure country air.

The winding echoes of the stageman's horn have died away in the hollows of the distant hills, and the fierce screech of the steam-whistle has driven out all the lingering memories from far-off valleys and glens. The coaches stand idle beneath lumbered sheds,—their wheels, their panels, their leathern springs, their seats, all coated with the dust of silent years. There are no living faces to throw out bright gleams of sunshine from the windows. No laughing voices are to be heard in its pent-up body. Within and without,—all is silent, desolate, and deserted. The kindly driver has got down from his high box, and no one has gone up to sit there in his place. The horses' hoof-prints are not marked on either side of the protruding pole. Every association is of sorrow. Every memory is tinged strangely with regret. There lives not a single recollection in connexion with them all, that is not shadowed with sadness for the departure of the Olden Time.

— On a mellow and sunny day in early Autumn, while the sight of one of these ancient Inns is fruitfully suggestive of genial fancies, it is

no less so of bright pictures of the Past. Lofty elms swing their majestic boughs protectingly over its moss-spotted roof, through whose golden leaves dance the spots of shifting sunshine. There is a broad piazza all around it,—front and sides—and ample benches are ranged against the wall. In the middle of the large and cleanly-kept yard, there is a pump; and a huge watering-trough stands beneath its nose.

The landlord looks as he looked fifteen long years ago; only his face is not so often as then illumined with pleasant smiles, and his eye does not kindle so readily with enthusiasm. The sleepiness that has settled down about the place, has dropped down, too, upon his eyelids; and he walks wandringly around, as if in vain quest of faces he would see again. If you choose to accost him, he has a kind word for you; but there is no readiness; nothing like the former elasticity in his speech. He does not exactly *mope*; yet he acts like one who is most a stranger in his own home. Once set him down at one of our newly painted “railway hotels,” with the clatter and confusion roaring loudly in his ears, and he returns to his old haunts more contented,—a more grateful man than before; yet he longs continually for something he has not, and looks ever for those who do not come.

—— Go into these old rooms again,—the cham-

ber, the hostelry-room, the great reception-room, and the dining hall,—and give your fancies free rein. The apartments are tenantless. The very echoes, once so musical, are dead. Voices do not answer each other from room to room, nor is the kind host's name any more pronounced by eager lips. The bustle has all died out. The paper upon the walls is mice-eaten and tattered, and hangs in rags down to the floor. There are huge spider-webs in the corners and angles, and upon the dusty ceiling, where once the housemaid's busy broom went its accustomed rounds.

Ladies in ruffs and rich brocades, with gayly-attired children, and long retinues of servants, lighten the window-panes no longer with their beautiful faces. Maids have stopped running breathlessly from chamber to kitchen, and from kitchen to chamber again, obeying the behests of their mistresses. The silence that has so long usurped their places, could hardly be more unbroken if it were the silence of death itself.

Men used to walk briskly about the premises, enjoying every moment of their stay. Now, they only lounge listlessly into the bar-room, drink a burning dram, and lounge lazily out again. Save when, on some winter's day, while the snow spits furiously upon the little windows, they congregate in squads about mine host's capacious chimney,

and spirt regularly recurring streams upon his bedimmed fire.

There are no visitors about the place as once there were. A slender amount of travel in private carriages, at this day of smoke and steam, is the little all by which the landlord is able to console himself, and keep body and soul together. He does not live, by such assistance; he only exists. Life has lost its main zest for him. He seems to be inwardly longing for the pleasant morning to come, when he shall himself set out on his last journey.

— I undertake not to break a lance with those who make it a business to laugh at sentiment on such a subject as this. It is a subject all associations and mellow memories. Such memories are cherished by the heart simply for their own sake. It takes a secret delight in lingering about reminiscences that are so full of joy, though it be tempered somewhat with sadness.

It is with a feeling, too, not much unlike grief, that we view these stand-points between our own and the former times. Because we all know that what the world has gained in the matter of speed, it has lost in respect of solid traveling enjoyments. And then springs up a deep sympathy with the almost isolated race of companionable landlords; who could not, if they would, desert their old fields

of service, and embark in the stirring adventures of these busy times. Their ancient homes and haunts are associated with no thoughts but those of health, happiness, and plenty. We cross their decaying thresholds, and think of the scores of friends that have journeyed away from them forever. We look out through their windows, and remember the glad faces that have so often cheered them through those same panes. The lights are gone out in the chambers. The gleaming fire-dogs cease to glow on either side the huge chimney in the hall. No voices are there, as of yore; no laughter; no smiles; no joyous countenances.

—— The Old Inns are silent and untenanted. Who doth not grieve heartily for the change? ——

UNDER THE TREES.

STRETCHED at full length upon the soft sward that invites me, I am gazing, on this golden Autumn day, at the profuse wealth of the landscape.

I am back again on the delicious old Home-spot. The cries of the distant Babel have died away from my hearing. Its clouds of smoke and dust have vanished from before my eyes. Its crowds have hurried away from every thing but my memory. I forget all,—I try to think of nothing so much as the soft, hazy, dreamy atmosphere, in which my senses are lulled to such gentle repose.

Once only in the whole year, and then in this clear Autumnal weather, have these maples such a charm for me. It is not simply the *shade* I covet; it is this feeling of quiet happiness; of pure and entire satisfaction; of genial, genuine love for every body and every thing. I am drawn to this spot by it, as by a magnet. I behold every object through a thin veil of delightful illusion. Things

that but now seemed earthly and gross, here wear vestments of a different character.

And what the wonder? Do fairer pictures anywhere glow, than those at this moment hung up before my vision? Are colors anywhere to be found more skillfully and gorgeously combined? Is there a hand of bone and sinew, that ever held the brush so daintily as Nature's?

— There is a soft veil drawn over the distant meadows, and slopes, and hill-sides, as if only through such a medium their brilliant hues should be seen. The effect is really enchanting,—so subdued, so dreamy, so half-light, half-shadow, do all things seem. I could lie here in this mellow sun, and gaze contentedly on such a landscape for hours together. The eye would never tire, nor the soul ever become surfeited. It is as if some pompous pageant were passing slowly before me; its whole line of march arched with liquid skies, whose spotless azure, and whose variegated clouds canopied all with a matchless beauty.

I think, at this time, of all that Earth holds out of promise;—promise no less to so quiet a dreamer as myself, than to the husbandman who has sweated through the suns of the weary summer solstice. And there steal, too, into my heart, sad remembrances of those who long ago pressed my hand, and faintly murmured,—“God's will be done!”

How sweetly do these memories work in the heart, on such a time. What a coloring they shed over one's thoughts, and purposes, and desires. How much more etherealized—how very much more radiant, become all the hopes of the future,—ever vague, and ever limitless.

The "golden pomp of Autumn" is on every side. An unseen hand has flung dyes, more bewildering than dreams themselves, over the masses of the foliage, and the dense woods are blazing with indescribable beauty. The stately chestnut lifts its head proudly above its fellows, and its leaves of yellow gold clatter in the light wind like so many burnished shields. The maples are all purple, and russet, and yellow, and red,—vieing with the rest in the variety of tints and tinges. Scarlet and crimson,—russet and red,—purple and gold,—unite to give a resplendent drapery to the closing season. There is no color known to human skill, of which Nature has not furnished the first exemplar here.

The summer vines still creep over the moss-covered walls, and cling affectionately to the forest trees; and their tender leaves, fanciful as the shapes of some of them are, have already put on the showy livery of the season. Even the low whortleberry-bushes in yonder pasture have so far obeyed the requirements of this fantastic masquerade, as to consent to dip their small leaves in colors

of flaming red and vermillion. The silent breaths of the frost, that pass through the woods in the night like the speechless angel of death, have touched the cheeks of the wild-grapes, and they hang blushing in thick and purpled clusters. The leaves of their vines, however, have become yellow and crisp, and are slowly falling, one by one, to the ground.

It is so unlike the Spring-tide here under these trees,—yet one can hardly explain the peculiarity. There is no feeling of strength; of new courage; of ambition rekindled in the heart. The slanting sunshine floods these meadows, lays up against those old stone walls, and streams through these thick tree-branches, with a far milder influence than in the days of the opening Spring. The year is going out through the gorgeous western gate. The feeling of delicious dreaminess is upon me as I lie here. It is the very reverse of active ambition. It would quite lose its charm, and destroy the whole of its effect, if it were broken in upon by any of the jarring discords of ambition or avarice.

Not a tree, nor a bough,—not a shrub, nor a vine, in all the woods, but joins to-day in the grand carnival. The mountain-side is resplendent with the glory of colors, inimitable in the skillfulness of their combinations. No Gobelin weaver ever

threw such variegated hues as these together. No master painter ever caught such tinges from his moments of inspiration, and afterwards immortalized them on canvas. The living truth of the great Poet's saying now comes vividly upon me,—

“There is in Nature nothing base or mean,”—

and I am made doubly happy in the thought, that this illimitable gallery is opened so freely to all hearts and eyes. Each tree upon the hill-side crowds ambitiously by the side of its comrade, and flings out its thousand colors like bright banners from some high battlement. Maple and birch, beech and ash, chestnut and oak, are all holding high revel to-day. And far within the distant vista, I see the fiery-red leaves of the hardy sumach, looking, if possible, more brilliant than any; perhaps because it is not permitted to rear its head as high as the rest, is it allowed this compensation of superior brilliancy. The golden-rods display their scarlet berries in the open pastures, and on the skirts of the wood; and about the rude hedges grow the long, draping branches of the inky skoke. The grass-spears bow with a sorrowful sigh before the fitful gusts of the wind, and teach many a sad lesson of the final decay that will overtake us all.

Yonder plain, stretching far away on the lowlands at my feet, is already crowded with the

ripened grain, and many an ear of the golden maize has burst its sheaf, to greet the smiles of the genial sun. I see the farmer's wain go slowly down the winding lane, faithfully following the worn cart-rut, and then emerging into the newly-opened harvest field. The oxen wait patiently till the filled husks are piled into the cart, perchance solacing the drowsy moments with a sly bite at the nearest stalks and ears. Attendant dogs are barking at some predatory animal they have succeeded in driving into the wall, and the clear autumnal air is alive with their sharp echoes. The blissful boys carry the bundled stalks to the huge wagon, shouting to each other as they rustle their unsteady loads against the standing grain, and looking, at this distance, as if they were but bunches of moving corn. The merry "gee-up" of the farmer rises above all other sounds, and the patient cattle plod onward till called to again in a much louder—"whoa—who."

Ponderous pumpkins reveal their yellow wealth between occasional corn-hills; and when at length the load of grain is all made up, these rotund treasures are borne away on the top of all to the "gude housewife",—the children rolling them about on the load at each other in mimic quarrels, yet jealously careful that not one of them is lost to the oven.

And there go loads of apples, rich-flavored and rare, in open wagons into the husbandman's barns. They look like piles of gold to me, and they surely suggest far pleasanter visions:—of unions around the blazing hearth,—of merry parties,—and of delightful dreams during the lengthened evenings of Winter. And what a wealth, I think, do the husbandman's acres bring to his granaries and barns! How abundantly doth Nature provide for all her children,—and how lavish is she with all her riches! And yet, how very far from grateful are we all for what we so undeservedly enjoy!

—— The skies, too,—the skies! Are hues more exquisite than theirs to be found, even among the skies of any of the old masters? ——

I see only the lower strips of the heavens, lying here, and those nearest the horizon. They are hung about with this light haze, more airy and thin than any gossamer. They are, however, all blue, and the very haze seems but to make them all the clearer. Between the clustering leaves overhead, I discover patches of the purest azure. There is a warmth in them, too, that even melts its way through the leafy canopy, until it kindles a similar warmth in my own heart. I fancy, at this moment, that I see *farther* into the liquid depths of heaven than before; and think that angels are there, ready to descend to earth on their holy errands.

— And then I dream of those gentle ones, whose dumb and pale lips I long ago pressed with my own, and whose last syllables were but expressed hopes of a reunion above. And thus I keep dreaming beneath these trees, and continue gazing into these heavens; for my soul is stirred with the holiest impulses, and revelling in the sweetest elysium. The white slabs that reveal themselves, as a fitful gust of wind blows aside the leaves upon the lowest boughs, stand only like pure and firm promises,—that what has once been spoken will most surely be fulfilled.

It seems proper that the forests should deck themselves in their holiday apparel, at this peculiar season. It is the great Harvest Home of the year. Everything is being gathered into its garner. The fruits are piled in heaps on spacious floors, and the golden maize presses to bursting the sides of the generous granaries. What, then, so meet, as that the skies should bend over all with sunnier smiles, and the forests array themselves in the most gorgeous clothing. How could the great pageant be so becomingly kept up, as by these matchless colorings and unrivaled combinations.

— An hour of such contemplations, is not all an hour of dreams. It is not altogether profitless. It melts down, in the crucible of reflection, all unhal-

lowed aspirations, and refines the fine gold of one's heart still many times more. The feelings become attuned to softer impulses; even as one is lulled into dreams by the musical fall of waters, or the sweet blowing of some drowsy wind.

RUTH.

IT had cost her much pain and many struggles, but Ruth at length came in sight of the old beech-tree beneath which William Britton had promised for the last time to meet her.

She approached it with a sorrowful heart. Tears were swimming in her blue eyes, and when through their mist she dimly saw the well-known tree, around which were gathered such and so many memories, they broke from her lids and dropped on the ground at her feet.

He was not yet there, and she had half a mind to go back again ; she was so undecided, and her heart was so full of swelling grief. Hardly knowing why, however, she pushed out to the foot of the tree, and seated herself upon one of its gnarled and twisted roots.

— Her bonnet was in her hand ; and the wealth of her auburn hair showered in golden curls over her neck and shoulders, while the rays of the setting sun braided up her unbound locks in

bands of matchless beauty. A strange glory seemed to have at that moment settled upon her head; while her large and lustrous eyes beamed with a light that could not have been altogether earthly.

She strained her gaze, now up and now down the road, but as yet descried no one approaching. It was a lovely spot, and intruder's feet rarely crushed the grass-blades there. At this sunset hour, too, the influences about it were all sombre and sad. And they stole into the heart of the gentle Ruth like long shadows, not altogether dark, yet but triflingly illumined by any brightness from her own thoughts. They drew her dreaming eyes magnetically to the earth,—and she began to run over in her mind the olden days, the golden clusters of hopes, the generous promises, and the boundless future. All were full of happiness, and love, and truth.

— A rustling in the thicket aroused her from her reverie. She looked up, and saw her lover standing beside her.

At first she could scarcely speak, for her deep emotion. She was looking in the face of him who was to her dearer than all others, for the last time in many years. There would be no one to whom she might carry all her secret thoughts, when he was gone. All sympathies would become stone, when his warm sympathies were withdrawn from

her.—Poor Ruth! Little the wonder that her feelings well nigh overwhelmed her.

William Britton was only a poor boy, the son of a hard and unfeeling father. Farm-work he thought he had had quite enough of. On the airy wings of his dreams he was borne upward to higher points, until he almost touched the gilded pinnacles his ambition had crected. He was thoroughly tired of what he thought a life of drudgery. His father took no pains to interest him in his labors, and never dreamed of the necessity or policy of holding out promises. He said that *the law* allowed him his son's labor until he should have got beyond his minority; and then he was obliged to have no more to do with him.—And this is the reasoning,—cold and heartless as it is,—of many and many a father the world over.

— The youth stood beneath the twisted old beech-tree, *a runaway!* His small bundle of clothes was slung upon a stick across his shoulder, and he had fully equipped himself for his journey. He wore a pair of stout boots upon his feet, that looked as if they must outlast even the stern stuff of which his heart, at that moment, seemed made. Yet there was a hesitation in his manner, and a want of decisiveness in his words, that betrayed at once, when he attempted to speak, the trouble that was gathering thickly about his heart. He wanted

to appear only manly ; and it was beyond the strength of his resolution to act out the deceit. His eyes fell to the ground ; his lips quivered ; he sat down beside Ruth, and took her hand in his own.

It was several moments before either of them could speak. Choking sensations obstructed their utterance. And when at length words came, they were spoken in low and melancholy tones, keeping a strange and musical harmony with the lull of the evening air, yet echoing in the heart-chambers of each as loudly as if spoken by a thousand tongues.

"Ruth," said the young boy, still holding her hand between his own, "I shall come back again."

"But it will be a great while first," replied the artless girl. "The summer will all be gone ; and the winter will come and go, too ; and the spring-flowers will bloom on the hill-sides, and in the woods, and down the lanes ; and another summer will come again,—and another,—and how many, many more ! Oh, William,—*can* I wait so long ?"

The tender earnestness of the speech had nearly prevented his replying at all. But he rallied himself with a strong effort, and said to her :—

"My dear Ruth, can you not wait but a few years, when you know they will bring you so much more happiness in the end ? Will you not suffer this separation for such a length of time, if by the means we shall both be the happier ?"

He watched her countenance, to see what effect his words might have upon her. She answered him only after much difficulty, while the glistening tears swam in her eyes:—

“My heart is strong. It will bear much.”

And at this point she broke forth in convulsive sobs, that prevented her uttering another syllable.

William wound his arm gently about her waist, and drawing her still nearer to himself, kissed her pale forehead,—*how* pale, and cold! It startled him.

He gazed again into her eyes, but said not a word. Their eyes met once more.

“It is asking *too* much!” exclaimed he. “Ruth,—Ruth, I will *not* go! I will stay! I will stay to make you always happy!”

“No—no,” replied Ruth, her resolution coming opportunely to her aid. “Go;—go, and be what you have determined to be. Do what your heart has settled upon. Go, and be happy.”

“And shall *you* be happy, too, Ruth?”

“Too happy,—too happy, if I only know that you succeed in all your wishes,” replied the devoted girl.

He pressed her to his heart again,—that youthful heart beating so tumultuously!

“In five years,” said he, as he rose to his feet and gazed sorrowfully about him. “It costs me

a trial, Ruth; and it costs you a sorer one; but my hopes are bright enough to throw light upon my path. It would all be dark without them. And I have your prayers, too."

"All of them," said she.

He pressed his lips to her forehead again. Once more he took her by the hand, and pressed it in a silent farewell. He could not trust himself to words.

He felt something thrust into his hand, but dared not look to see what it was. His heart was too full.

Casting a long and tender glance backward at the bride of his young heart, his own eyes already filled with blinding tears,—William Britton began in silence and sorrow his journey through the world; the same journey, on which so many sink down, faint, and weary, and worn, by the way-side; and so many more meet only disappointments enough to make them wish from their hearts they had never started. Truly,—it must be a stout heart that presses through all the trials, and finds a victory to recompense it at the end.

— Ruth gazed after him anxiously and prayerfully, till the dense shadows received him to their embrace in the distance; and long after he had finally disappeared, her eyes were fixed on the spot where she last saw his departing form.

Then turning her head about again, she bent down beneath the great weight of her grief, and suffered her turbulent sorrow to swell and burst in a rain of hot tears.

When this inward tempest had in a degree subsided, she felt more calm; and she arose from her seat, forgetful that the dusky shadows were already dancing and grouping hither and thither upon the old road, and slowly pursued her way home again.

— All that night, she lay tossing upon her bed. She had a secret in her heart, which she dreaded equally to keep and to reveal. Her sister Mary frequently asked her what caused her so much uneasiness, and why she slept so little, and tossed so much; but the replies of the sad girl were only subterfuges, beneath which her lonely heart hoped to conceal all its bitter feelings.

She told Mary that the night was warm; and the moon was bright; and that when the wind-gusts lifted the boughs of the old elm before the window, she could see the white headstones that glimmered through the green of the distant churchyard. Mary tried to laugh these sombre fancies out of her sister's brain; but even so gay a creature as she was unequal to the task.

Ruth only murmured the more to herself, as if in a troubled dream.

"But you see the headstones every night, when the moon shines, do you not?" rallied her sister.

"Yes; but how much *whiter* they look now," returned Ruth.

"What should make them so, pray?" persisted Mary, determined to get fairly on the track of these phantoms, and chase them away altogether.

"It should be the moon; but it is not. I do not know *what* it is. But how white,—how *very* white!"

Mary at length indulged her sister in suffering her to pursue what she called her odd fancies, and herself fell asleep. But sleep did not come near the pillow of Ruth. She watched, till the gray streaks streamed up over the eastern sky; and her pillow was wet with tears. The round red sun glared like a ball of fire through the morning mist, and fell upon the wall of her room.

Mary was up early, and her voice was to be heard everywhere about the house. She seemed to Ruth even gayer than usual on that morning; but it must have been because of the contrast with the deep depression of her own spirits at that sad time. Every ringing laugh that fell on the ears of Ruth, made her, if possible, still more sad.

Days and weeks wore slowly away. The sudden disappearance of the young man from the village, was the topic of talk for many a week; but even

that at length gave place to others equally interesting, and still more new. No one, save only Ruth, knew why or whither he had gone. Perhaps the secret at times made her heart ache, but still she kept it.

Never did the days lag for her more slowly. How many times she wished she could set the old hall-clock forward,—far forward,—days, weeks, months, years! And then a sudden sense of the great length of time that must yet elapse before she should see William, rushed over her again; and she thought she *could not* wait so long. She felt as if upon seeing him immediately, depended not only her happiness, but her very life itself.

It was a great grief, and the harder to bear because it must be borne in silence. Under such griefs some hearts cannot live.

And as Ruth, day by day and week by week, grew still more anxious, and became still more saddened at heart,—and as her countenance overspread with a still more frightful pallor, and her voice became even more melancholy and low,—there were some who thought she could not be wholly well; and others who did not heed these alarming changes at all,—the more alarming, because so insidious; and others still, who had no sympathy whatever for illy-concealed sorrow; and thought she was a remarkably indolent girl, who would live long enough to know what the need of labor was. And

as for Ruth herself, she bore all these mocking taunts, and mean insinuations, and cruel looks, as best she could; even the changed manner of her parents became at length quite natural to her, and she thought, or tried to think, they must be right in thus abandoning her to the consuming canker of her secret sorrow.

— Weeks and months passed; but no tidings from her lover. She dreamed—and prayed—and hoped; and in this little circuit her hours run their monotonous round. Quite different from her was Mary. She was full of vivacity, and an unaffected gayety hung, like a charm, about her spirits; Ruth was quiet, and thoughtful, and fearfully calm. Her heart was unmoved by the trifling objects that so easily excited Mary to laughter or passion. Yet for all this, it was much richer in deep feeling than Mary's. She appeared calm, and always self-possessed; but beneath the glassiness of that calm exterior the wildest tempests of feeling were oftentimes breaking.

And while time was thus silently slipping away, unnoticed by all save Ruth, and after the very name of William Britton had almost been forgotten by the good people the country round, a strange gentleman chanced to pass a portion of a summer season in the village. He had come there to recruit his worn-down energies. Coming from a distant

city, he was of course naturally delighted with the freshness and beauty of the retreat he had chosen.

In respect of his person, he was tall, of good figure, manly looking, and attractive. With manners that were noticeable for their ease and polish, his conversation likewise betrayed a mind of no mean degree of cultivation. He was reputed, in addition, to be possessed of considerable wealth; and that valuable fact had all the weight to which it was entitled—I do not say, any more—with the maidens and mothers of the little village.

In proper course of time and events, he had succeeded in pleasing quite everybody. There was no social or family board, to which he was not heartily welcome. If a pic-nic was to be held in the grove, his name was the one first thought of in the schedule of invitations. All convivial gatherings would have been tedious indeed, without him. So it was silently voted by all. His flow of humor was inexhaustible. To every one he studiously made himself agreeable. He seemed informed on all topics of immediate interest, and commanded no less the respect, than the admiration of the town. He certainly could not help quietly thinking that the village never before contained so important a character as he.

He had seen Mary, and from the first was pleased with her. Her vivacity, appearing so natural,

charmed him. She betrayed him into unexpected confessions, and strangely entangled his heart with feelings of whose nature he had before known nothing. Yet Mary was neither artful nor designing; unless the most artless simplicity be such; and of this she was possessed of quite her share. In truth, the very absence of all art was, with her, the highest degree of art. So it is in other matters, as well as in manners.

While Mary was thus engaged in securing the attentions of the stranger chiefly to herself, Ruth was reserved, and kept out of the way altogether. Perhaps her native modesty, now exaggerated to sensitiveness, drew her back from view; perhaps it was her sad thoughts for her long-absent lover; or it may have even been from both these causes combined. At all events, she studiously avoided the stranger's society, as, indeed, she had long seemed to shun that of every one else.

But even all this would not do. This very reserve, in which she had wrapped all her actions, and even her character itself, served to whet his curiosity the more; and out of this excited curiosity sprang a living interest in her. Cost what the effort might, he determined to become acquainted with Ruth.

How this was all finally accomplished, I will not undertake in this place to say. The petty delays

and perplexing disappointments that environed his way, were numerous, and as variously overcome. It would be but a repetition of what has occurred a thousand times before, and of no especial profit or interest to the reader, either.

— He was taking a lonely walk in the woods that skirted the village, one fine afternoon, toward the sunset hour, engaged intently upon the shifting thoughts that chased each other across his brain. Reaching at length a shadowed spot, scooped out between two hills, he then for the first time espied a female, seated beneath one of the largest trees.

He hesitated a moment; then, as he saw at another glance who the fair wood-nymph was, he pushed boldly forward and accosted her.

“Good afternoon, Miss Ruth,” ventured he.

She returned his civility gracefully, though she could not disguise the feeling of alarm that came over her, as she found she was discovered in her retreat.

The gentleman began a lively and animated conversation with her; and at last succeeded so far in engaging her, as to venture to sit at her feet upon the moss-patch beneath the tree. She appeared to oppose no wish of hers to it, and the stranger’s heart took courage.

They sat there and talked, till the yellow sun shot its long arrows of gold through all the tree-

tops. The sky in the west grew red,—then purple,—then faintly orange;—and thus, one by one, the early evening tints were all folded in the dusky wings of the crowding shadows.

—— When they rose to their feet again to return to the village, the heart of the stranger had been freely and fully given to Ruth. He had only asked for her love in return. ——

Did she give it? Had she so soon, then, forgotten her old lover,—the poor boy, William Britton?

The countenance of the stranger, as both walked slowly homeward side by side, best answered for Ruth. It was overcast with an expression of deep anxiety; perhaps of disappointment. In any event, disappointment was in his heart.

—— No—no. Ruth was true to the instincts of her first abiding love! ——

But her parents came to hear of her decision, and took the earliest opportunity to upbraid her with her folly,—for such they thought it was. Yet they knew nothing of the strong passion that slept, like a hidden fire, in her heart,—the deep and strong love for the runaway. They could not help wondering why the fancy of the stranger, should settle upon so reserved and silent a girl as Ruth, and pass by such an impersonation of vivacious beauty as Mary. But the wonder was all they got for their trouble. In reading the secret of a heart,

their eyes were not the eyes of an infatuated lover.

At length the stranger took a final leave of the village, after having again and again renewed his expression of attachment to Ruth, and each time in vain. She was, by no means, insensible to the regard he professed; but, farther than this, she suffered his words to make no impression upon her. None were more moved by her conduct than her parents. They artfully essayed to divert the gentleman's preferences from Ruth to Mary. And at last, they became so much incensed at what they saw was inevitable, that it seemed as if they could with difficulty endure even Ruth's presence with them. Their affection was but one word for selfishness and pride.

And all this Ruth too well knew; and all the time, her heart was too full for utterance. To explain, would but inflame her parents still more; for as between the gentleman and the forgotten runaway, they would instantly have declared in favor of the former.

And when, too, Ruth began to think the whole matter calmly over again, and when she reflected that it was already a long, long time since she had heard from William, and that his feelings might undergo a change ere she should hear from him again,—she trembled in view of the fearful chances

that might yet overtake her; yet there was a secret power in her trustful heart, that made her strong. She did not falter: she could not hesitate, so long as that power controlled her.

After more sadness, more tears, more persecution,—and after many and many a silent and lonely tryste beneath the old beech-tree, where she had spoken the syllables of farewell to her long-estranged lover,—her heart temporarily threw off its great weight of sorrow, and the olden smiles shone out anew upon her face.

—— William Britton had returned!

His entrance into the village was the occasion of much surprise, and more remark. When Ruth first heard he had come, her strength failed her, and she felt as if she must faint. She withdrew to her little chamber, and there she only suffered herself to wonder if he looked as he did when the evening shadows took him out of her sight. She tried timidly to settle it in her mind, if he was yet as devoted to her as he promised ever to be. And she kept wondering, and questioning herself, and fearing, until her mind was in almost as unquiet a state as if she had heard that he was never to return again.

—— They met once more; but it was not until the following day! The delay was ominous.

The young boy had become a man. Long

absence had manifestly improved his appearance, and his tastes had undergone a good degree of cultivation.

He found both Ruth and Mary in their little parlor together. The meeting was cordial and unaffected. He was heartily glad to see them both again, and told them so with all the grace of a finished man of the world.

To Ruth he said nothing more than to Mary. Had he forgotten, then, all his old affection? Was his heart basely treacherous even to itself? —

— Day followed upon day. Not so much now was it the company of Ruth that he sought, as that of Mary. He walked with her at times down the old road; and into the grove; and even sat down beside her under the same beech-tree,—its roots still writhed and twisted together,—where he had many a time told of his passionate love for Ruth!

He told Mary, in a very flippant way, how very *tame* he thought Ruth had grown; that she seemed to have lost all her former vivacity; and that he only wished she had the life of some of the fine ladies *he* happened to know.

— Poor Ruth! Poor—poor Ruth!—And all this time, her heart was yearning with its whole feeble strength for the recompense of the boundless wealth it had so freely bestowed!

He saw Ruth daily ; but never a word from him of the future ;—nothing even of the past.

It was through Mary that Ruth at length heard of his intention to leave the village again in a few days. She silently prayed God for more strength to endure. And her breath grew short and quick ; and her heart beat wildly against her boddice ; and her pulses fluttered,—and sunk quite away,—and fluttered again.

The day of departure came. William arrived at the house of the sisters, at almost the last half-hour left him. He took his leave of both of them at once, and gave a little packet into the hand of Ruth as he turned away.

— It was the tokens of affectionate consolation she pressed on him, when he set forth in sorrow upon the world from beneath the old beech-tree!—

Her eyes were bent with a look of deeply anxious inquiry upon his ; but not so much as *the look* did he return. Perhaps he could not. Perhaps his thoughts smote him full fearfully, even at that late moment.

— He passed off down the winding road. Ruth saw no more. Her eyes failed her, but they were not blinded with tears. She could not weep. Tears would have been such a welcome relief.

— The days went on ; and the crescent moons came anew, and faded again in the sky.

The tints of Autumn were hanging upon the dense foliage, and the forests were clad in huge cloths of purple and gold.

Again the full, round harvest-moon hung, like a globe of silver, in the eastern sky. The chill wind-gusts lifted the leaves of the old elms once more; and the still moon glistened on the headstone of another grave!

— The broken heart had done beating. Ruth, —sweet and gentle Ruth,—had wept herself to sleep; and a cloud of sorrow seemed resting continually upon her newly-heaped grave.

THE LITTLE RAZOR-MAN.

I HAPPENED to get weather-bound one day, in journeying through a particular section in New England, and became unexpectedly obliged to console myself with whatever trifling diversions might offer themselves within the walls of a little snuggerly of a country Inn.

It was no very inviting place, *outwardly*, to be sure ; yet there was such an air of comfort within, that I half thanked the ill-fortune, already, that had thus walled me in there.

The diminutive bar-room was not crowded with lazy hangers-on ; and no riotous babble from unduly-excited tongues drowned my senses with its din. This, I must say, I liked hugely.

I had a fire—an *open* fire—kindled in my apartment ; and, wheeling up a table and an all-embracing easy chair before it, I resolved to make the hours pass as pleasantly as they would. There was no lack of ink, pens and paper in the house ; and I carried a few choice and well-thumbed books

in my portmanteau. And between the one thing and the other,—between a brief time of labor and an afterlapse of reverie,—I managed to go along with the finger on the dial, until mid-afternoon.

Then I confess to a sense of oncoming weariness. I pushed back my chair—yawned—threw down my book—looked discontentedly about the room—and finally resolved to go down stairs.

I entered the snug little bar-room. There was no person there save one small man. He was busily engaged about stopping some razors, and bowed very respectfully to me as I went in. He was such a peculiarity in himself, that I am sure I shall be pardoned for briefly describing him.

His hair was a whitish brown, and drawn carefully forward from his occiput. It did not altogether suffice to conceal the broadly bald spot on his crown, but reached onward to his wrinkled temples, where it made an only half-successful effort to work itself into a pair of loose curls.

His forehead was full; his eye tolerably quick and bright; his nose decidedly aquiline; his chin prominent—perhaps the more so from the loss of his teeth; and his whole head all the time in active motion.

He wore no dickey about his neck,—only a white cravat, which seemed drawn round with unnecessary, if not absolutely unsafe tension. A rusty

little frock-coat hung loosely from his shoulders,—most thoroughly worn, yet brushed with nice exactness and care. His vest buttoned high; his pantaloons shone almost like silk; and his feet were thrust into a pair of shoes, which he appeared to keep polished with all possible sedulousness.

Thus far respecting his personal appearance.

As I took my seat before the fire, I still kept my eyes quite unconsciously fixed upon him. There seemed to be something mysterious about him, which, though perhaps of little importance of itself, was still a mystery. He went on stropping his razor, however, and his whole body moved in harmony with his occupation.

"An unpleasant day, sir," exclaimed he, stopping to pluck a few hairs from his head, that could ill spare even one, and drawing the razor's edge across them.

"Very," I assented.

I could not help wondering, just at that juncture, whether he had lost all his hair in the way of his profession.

A silence ensued. It was broken, however, not long after, by his asking me if I had a razor that needed "setting." This was, I think, the professional term.

Glad to get an opportunity to draw the little oddity into the least betrayal of the secret that

seemed to me to clothe his very person, I instantly bethought myself that I had a pair of them in my portmanteau, and ran to get them. It was not long before he was hard to work over them.

As his body shook, his tongue began to run. I know not if he made it a point to be always thus communicative with his patrons, but certain it is, he opened a conversation with me, of whose termination I could have no conception whatever. He was quite inquisitive at the first; but finding that I was little disposed to act in the capacity of responding-master, he had the sagacity to drop that very soon, and entered upon a field of pure narration,—just what I most desired. To be sure, there was much soliloquy mixed in with it; but that only served to spice the whole more to my hungered taste.

A single judicious question or two put him at once on the track I wished; and his tongue ran on with incredible ease and swiftness.

“Thirty-three years ago, this very day,” said he, “I was married!”

He stared blankly at me for a moment, on the back of this announcement, as if to see how I was impressed with the deliberateness of the statement.

“I was at that time much better off in prospect than I am now, as you will not find it difficult to

believe, sir. I was in a good business, and my chances in life every day grew better.

"There had long been an attachment between my wife and myself, and we had always kept it a secret from her father. She was his only remaining child, and in truth, his only consolation; for his wife had been many years dead at that time. He loved this child as no father ever loved another.

"At length I resolved to call on the old gentleman, and, in as few words as possible, inform him of the attachment I had for his daughter. I did so. He received me with an excessive show of dignity and pride,"—here the little man's eye kindled, and his hand stopped in its quick motion—"and did not even ask me to be seated. So I stood before him; and candidly told him how I loved his daughter—his only child—and that I wished his permission to marry her.

"You never saw such rage in all your life, sir! He rose from his chair, and hastily advanced to me. I thought he really foamed at the mouth.

"'Leave my presence, villain! Leave my presence, dog! and never pollute its atmosphere again!—never dare to speak to me again, either on this or any other subject!' ordered he, clenching his fist, and offering to thrust it at me.

"My temper was quick,—it is apt to be, even now, sir,—but I kept it down. The temptation was

strong, but I came off conqueror *that* time. I gnashed my teeth together, and left him at once.

"The result of this interview was made known to his daughter, at as early a moment as it could be done. Her resolution was taken the instant I made the proposition to her."

"The proposition to do what?" interrupted I.

"To run away—to elope!" replied he.

"Early one morning,—and a cloudy morning it was too,—we were many a mile away from her proud father, on the road to a magistrate. Before breakfast-time we were man and wife; and a *happier* pair of people you never *did* see!"

I assured him I did not doubt it in the least.

"The end of it was, her father was so angry at the step she had taken, that he disinherited her at once, married again, and at his death, which happened several years after, bequeathed the whole of his property to his second wife and her children by a former husband!

"We left those parts at once. I knew that was not the place for me to succeed according to my heart's desire. I resolved to move into a distant part of the country, and after many years return home again, a rich man. I thought *that* was the best revenge I could have on him.

"Years rolled on. Our union was made still more blessed by the birth of a child—a girl. But

sorrow trode close on at the heels of joy, for my wife herself died in less than a twelvemonth afterwards, and only my babe was left me! Thus were all my hopes dashed to the earth!

"The child grew up. The years seemed to have wings, so swiftly did they fly away. The child became a blooming, beautiful girl.

"I followed my calling with steadfastness and industry. In time I sent her away to school, determined to give her every opportunity of improvement that was in my power. She grew as intelligent as she was handsome. Her cultivated manners well set off the beauty of her person.

"She returned home to me again. You cannot understand, either, sir, what a joy her presence seemed to diffuse about her. I almost felt that her dead mother was back again!

"I doted on my child more and more. My feelings were all bound up in her. I was never an hour happy if she was needlessly out of my sight. The feeling grew, I believe, to be a half monomania. I felt that two loves were concentrated upon one being;—and she only a child.

"I thought nothing of her ever leaving me. I felt that she could never have *the heart* to go and leave me, when my love for her was so strong and so devoted. I gave myself no fears on that score, but exerted myself to the utmost to make her happy.

"I thought she *was* happy. I was *sure* she *was*. Nothing more could have been done to make her so.

"But the canker began to eat. I felt the thorns at last, as they thrust their slender barbs through the roses."

"What?" I involuntarily asked.

I thought *she* might have died suddenly, too, and thus left the old man quite desolate.

"I awoke one morning and went over the house, to find her gone," said he.

"*Gone!*" exclaimed I.

"Yes, sir," he mournfully replied. "She had eloped with a young man who had been acquainted with her but a very brief time!

"I knew nothing what to do, or where to go. I was distressed almost beyond endurance. I felt as if my heart must break. I thought that no anguish could be as keen as my own.

"My spirits were depressed. They failed me at last altogether. My business entirely run out; and from a fair prospect of obtaining a snug little fortune, I fell back into the arms of poverty. Ah, how utterly wretched I was!

"I was determined to leave the scene of this my last distress, and ventured this way. I have traveled through this section for many and many a year. The business I am now following, I have followed all this time. It gets me a living, and

that is enough. More than this would make me miserable."

He paused a moment or two from his work ; laid down the razor beside him ; brushed away a tear from his eyes with his faded coat-sleeve ; and then patiently resumed his labor again.

How are the follies of a man visited upon him in the way of punishment, I mused, even during his lifetime ! There is no escaping them.

Just at that moment I heard the crack of a whip and the loud rattling of wheels. I hurried to the window. The ponderous mail-coach was coming up to the door. It was blackened with passengers.

They alighted, one by one, to take refreshment. A lady, with two children, was among them, clad in deepest mourning.

A man suddenly darted by me, nearly throwing me down in the doorway, which I had reached. It was the little Razor Man. He sprang forward to the lady, and threw his arms about her person, uttering mingled cries of distress and joy.

He had found *his daughter* !

Early the next morning the coach rattled out of the yard again. One of the passengers waved his hat and hand to me together. It was my friend—the little Razor Man. His widowed daughter was taking him away to her own house and to happiness. I felt relieved.

THE LONE HEART.

NEVER was there another such rural paradise as the village of Willowbend.

It was so named from having been laid out on the bend, or arm, of a sweet little river—hardly larger than a creek—whereon grew in profusion the native willow. The main street of the village, to be sure, was not lined with these trees, but the river was fringed with them as far as the eye could reach, either above or below.

A vigorous growth of rock-maple threw down its broad and refreshing shadows upon the sides of the street, and over the door-yards of the houses. A fine spring morning had settled upon the quiet place; shaking down the ruddy apple-blossoms from the trees in the gardens and orchards; and showering musical notes from a thousand twittering birds over the air. The place was alive with melody.

And the buzzing bees were swarming about the peach-trees, and the apple-trees, making their glittering wings vibrate in the sunshine, like the

twinkling feet of a sylphide in the blaze of a hundred foot-lights. Their buzzing sounded drowsy, and induced an insensible torpor of the soul.

The little river flashed in the effulgence of the morning sun, rushing round the bend with all the joy of a living creature, and leaping up near the shores to kiss the pendulous boughs that draped its margin. It looked like a plate of clear crystal, or of spotless silver, set in a frame-work of emerald—the latter wrought in the most fanciful style of arabesque. In places, it was clear and limpid, betraying the interior deeps of its richness; again, it was dark and shadowed, as if the magic of the sunlight was yet needed to dispel the gloom that brooded there; and still again, it was most beautifully iridescent, streaked, and mottled. The eye, in truth, might have reveled among the pictures it offered for a whole morning, and yet not become wearied.

Willowbend was a quiet place, as one might at once conclude. It was not turned topsy-turvy each day by the whirlwind rush of a train of cars through the streets; nor were the calm and usually possessed heads of its inhabitants crazed with daily news of distant robberies, arsons, thefts, and murders; sown, like thistle-seeds on the wind, by the still damp pages of newspapers. It was a spot wholly after the heart of nature. Nay, it seemed

the very heart of nature itself. There was nothing to break in upon calm reflection; nothing to shatter the sweet vision unexpectedly into a hundred fragments; nothing to feed fears, or to minister to unnatural pleasures. On first seeing its dreamy scenery, and breathing its balmy airs, one would fancy he had caught a gleam of Elysium.

Mabel Adair had hired a small room in the village of Willowbend for the summer months, where she proposed giving lessons in drawing. It was an art in which she was greatly skilled, both by study and experience; and she hoped at this time to gain an abundant subsistence by giving instruction in it to others.

She was a girl of perhaps eighteen years; full of soul, and betraying her superior intelligence even in her eyes. Her personal appearance was strikingly beautiful. A secret grace, inexplicable to others, always sat upon her manners, imparting a charm to her conversation, and lighting up the expression of her features with a radiant and irresistible beauty. She had profuse brown hair, parted simply from her forehead, and her eyes were large, and of a dark hazel. A clear red-and-white complexion rendered her face still more attractive, over which the pallor and the rich carmine were wont to chase each other for a long time together, as in play. Yet there was an habitual sadness

upon her countenance, suggesting thoughts of hidden grief and unsubdued sorrow, that never found their way into expression. The smiles and the sadness were at times so strangely commingled, that it might truly be said of her she was smiling at her own grief.

Hers was a heart-history, upon whose pages no eye in Willowbend had yet rested. While she absolutely avoided the society of none, she appeared shy and reserved in the presence of all. Even her few pupils never felt altogether at their ease in her company. She did not, however, *repel* others; she only withdrew within herself.

She delighted in solitude; in long and lonely walks by the river; in her own sweet, yet saddened meditations. When school was over for the day, she not unfrequently wandered away by herself, and was gone for hours together, no one knew where.

In church, she was the same sad-looking beauty. Her countenance even drew the eyes of many of the congregation from the objects to which they ought devotionally to have been turned. Everybody appeared to love her, for her innocence—for her sweet childishness—for her indescribable grace—and, more than all, for her secret sorrow. Ah, how many an one in Willowbend wished to reach

the cankerous grief that seemed to be preying on her soul!

Mabel stepped to the door of her apartment on this fine morning in spring, in response to a light knock that fell on her ear. Looking out into the narrow hall, she observed a young girl, who instantly thrust a little note towards her, and turned away.

Mabel read it in silence, and for at least a moment afterwards stood lost in thought.

The burden of the note was an invitation to the residence of the Misses Jewsbury, in the village, on the third evening thereafter.

Mabel Adair had had but a slight acquaintance with the Jewsburys, as indeed with all the rest of the village; but they had so far treated her with such uniform kindness and consideration, that she felt already half compelled to respond in person to their request. Besides, the language of the note was so tender and studiously kind, that she had no heart to attempt replying by any expressions of regret that she was unable to be one of their company.

The entire forenoon was but a three hours' reverie for the girl. She caught herself frequently gazing at the face of some one of her pupils, she knew not why, and she could not know how long. Although the child stared at her, too, yet Mabel was conscious of nothing of the kind.

When the confinement of the day was over, the young teacher strolled, as was her wont, down by the river, and for some time amused herself in entwining water-plants into green wreaths of willow, and musing on the event of the day. This invitation from the Jewsburys had proved, in very truth, an *event* to her, as it threw her altogether out of the quiet channel of thought in which she had always kept, and in a measure excited her with an unconscious study of the chances of the future. All the naturally modest and sensitive instincts of the timid girl argued strongly against her going to the party; yet there was a secret influence upon her, whither obtained she knew not, that set all her instincts and fears at open defiance, and impressed her deeply with the *necessity* of being present.

And while she wove the willow-wreaths, and starred their emerald green with bright flower-cups, she resolved, cost what the effort might, to go. And at once, therefore, she set herself about making the preparations.

The eventful night chanced to be dark, and the sky was heavily overcast with clouds. A cool wind drew through the long avenue of the village, stirring the dense masses of maple-leaves upon the boughs, and breathing its fragrance beneath every porch, and within every lattice.

The parlors at the house of Mrs. Jewsbury were

already densely crowded, when Mabel reached them. She at once paid her respectful regards to the hostess and her daughters with a grace peculiarly her own, while she carefully avoided making even so slight a display of herself as would attract the attention of any other one. But the modesty of Mabel was exactly what most commended her to the general notice and respect. She unconsciously made herself what she desired most to avoid being—the observed of all.

The two Misses Jewsbury,—Ellen and Sarah, were, physically speaking, beautiful creatures. Everywhere they found admirers, and in abundance. They were gay-spirited—possessed of intellectual cultivation—wrote what were called elegant letters—sang heart-killing songs at the piano-forte—and dazzled with their conversation. Their manners were of the character that everywhere makes a sensation; but perhaps not always an impression.

A superabundance of family pride had been evidently instilled into their nature, and it never, or scarce ever, lacked an opportunity in which to work its way to the surface. And however much attention they might lavish on another, it was not difficult to see that they did it quite as much out of regard for themselves and for the proper display of their own qualities, as for any other purpose that could be imagined.

They were dressed, on this evening of their levee, in elegant taste, with a full eye to proper effect. They frequently exchanged words with each other, in such high tones as to be overheard by all around them; on which occasions they never forgot that their names were respectively Jewsbury, nor the peculiar merit that seemed to be represented by that name.

The Jewsburys had invited several of their friends from abroad to their house, on this evening, and among the rest, a young gentleman named Henry Judson. This gentleman was reported to be a student-at-law in the office of a distinguished practitioner in the metropolis, and had come to Willowbend, in express obedience to the request of his friends, the Jewsburys.

His personal appearance was attractive, and his conversational powers were certainly superior. Perhaps both the Misses Jewsbury had set their hearts upon him; although their proud mother had marked him indisputably for her daughter Ellen, who was two years the elder of Sarah. He was reputed to be possessed of great wealth—for a young man—but his talents seemed not at all eclipsed in their native brilliancy by the glitter of the gold. So much the more, said every one, to his credit and advantage.

"Who is that charming girl, yonder?" asked

Mr. Judson of his friend Ellen Jewsbury, as they were carelessly promenading the parlors together. "I have observed her several times this evening, and each time she interests me the more. I like her appearance much."

"Do you?" questioned Ellen, in an abstracted tone.

"Yes, I must say that I have rarely ever seen so sweetly pensive a face, in my life."

"Mr. Judson!" exclaimed Ellen in reply.

"I declare, Miss Ellen," said he, "I must request an introduction to her! You know her, of course?"

"Yes; her name is Adair," answered Ellen, slowly.

"And am I at all mistaken in my estimate of her?"

"That I can't tell you; for she has not been a resident of the village long, and I am but little acquainted with her, at the best. But she's only a *teacher*."

Perhaps there was an undue emphasis upon the last word that fell from the lips of Ellen Jewsbury. At any rate, Mr. Judson dropped his searching eyes to her mouth just at that inopportune moment, and there read the lines of disdain.

"A teacher?" repeated he, after her.

"That is all. *Now* do you want an introduc-

tion?" she added, with some little timidity, yet throwing the sunshine of a smile over the whole.

"But a teacher of what?" persistently questioned he.

"Of drawing, I believe."

"Then I shall so much the sooner desire to be presented to her. Yes, may I ask the favor of you *now*, Miss Jewsbury?"

She bowed slightly in assent, and immediately led him to the charming girl. Mabel Adair received him with her wonted ease, when Ellen instantly turned and left them alone together. It was plain to Mr. Judson that she was not altogether pleased with his interest in this stranger, and he treasured the secret in his heart, resolved at his earliest opportunity to revolve it again. For the present, however, he was altogether taken up with Mabel.

The conversation was upon the art which most interested her; and he assured her of the deep sympathy he himself possessed for her profession, by the many happy expressions he employed in its connection.

He succeeded, by his intelligent and refined remarks, in interesting her deeply in her subject; and when at length her increased earnestness broke down, in a measure, the restraints of her speech, and infused a warmth into her manner, she betrayed a secret and indefinable beauty he was not pre-

pared to expect. And to all appearances, she became reciprocally interested in him; although the self-imposed constraint of her manner struggled hard with her disposition to betray it.

As the time passed away, the young man found himself quite committed to Mabel's interests. He had already told her how long he intended to remain at Willowbend, and proposed to himself the pleasure of visiting her at her leisure, and of talking more on the topics that had so much interested them on that evening.

The remainder of the evening offered but little other pleasure to Mr. Judson than what he found in the presence of Miss Mabel Adair. The very atmosphere around her seemed spiritual; even her eyes appeared to shoot glances of ethereal power, within whose attractive spell he was both charmed and subdued.

And although he paid as much attention thereafter to Miss Ellen Jewsbury as was both proper and agreeable to her, yet a look of dissatisfaction—perhaps it was of envy—rested upon her countenance, and she could not conceal the rankling at her heart from his observation.

What made the affair still more intricate, and excited Miss Ellen's jealousy and dissatisfaction still more,—he offered very gallantly to wait upon Mabel to her home, after the breaking up of the

party ; and his offer was gratefully accepted. This step was the crowning one of his evening. He might have done all he did do, save this, and perhaps his conduct would have been overlooked. *This* was something, which the Jewsburys would be loth to pass by unnoticed.

The second day after this, Mr. Judson and Mabel were seen walking slowly in the direction of the little river. They were chatting gayly, and the countenance of Mabel seemed irradiated with a new light ; yet the cloud of sadness was not altogether lifted. It had apparently come to be a part of her settled expression.

They wandered along until they reached a particular spot which Mabel called the favorite one of the many she had chosen. It was a grassy little knoll, that looked down into the river, and might have been prettily called a headland. Here they seated themselves. Drooping willows were at their backs, and the glassing water swelled at their feet.

They talked of drawing, and freely discussed its charms for a poetic mind. Then they passed on to painting, and pictures, and scenery. And from nature to poetry. And from poetry—the passage is always so easy—to the human heart itself.

The young man grew eloquent in his description of the subtle and evanescent thoughts that entered his mind, and of the ethereal feelings that chased

over the surface of his soul. He betrayed to Mabel the depth, and the breadth, and the intensity of that sympathy, which kindles with no warning, and flames beyond control. His voice to her ear was welcome music. His looks—when she dared meet them for a moment—were full of love. There was a radiance about his countenance, which she had never before beheld.

And in despite of himself, or perhaps in true keeping with his resolution, he declared to Mabel all his preferences. He confessed at last his *love*. She heard from his own feverish lips, that she was the beloved of his heart—and he, only a week ago, an entire stranger!

They sat there on that little river-headland, and talked long about it. The young man was in love—deeply, irrevocably in love. His happiness could not be full, till he had heard from Mabel's own lips that his passion was returned.

He did hear it at last. The confession was finally made. Even the modest and sensitive heart of Mabel Adair was too full of truth to be guilty of deceit at a moment so fraught with interest as this.

It was a hasty thought. No—it was no thought at all. It had been no carefully prepared plan. Its very suddenness was but the better proof of its truthfulness. They became at once betrothed.

And a long time thereafter they continued sitting

on the hillock by the river. Their voices were low and soft. Often they did not speak at all for many moments, but only gazed into each other's eyes. The silence was language for them. It was full of thoughts, and they needed no interpreter.

The sun had gone down. Swart shadows were trooping down across the lawn; and sombre fancies played and danced about the argent surface of the river. The night-chorus of the insects had begun.

The two lovers only then thought to take their way back to the village again.

The young man involuntarily turned about to catch a last look at the spot where he had come into possession of so much happiness. It was already a thousand times hallowed in his eyes.

When they reached the village street, it was quite dusk. Old and young people were leisurely promenading the walks, and strolling over the broad belts of sward that lay on either side the street; and the hum of life that rose on the evening air, was full of soft and lulling melody.

They reached the apartment of Mabel, and the young man entered. An hour passed away there—an hour of complete happiness.

—It was time at length that Mr. Judson should take his final departure from the village. His arrangements for a correspondence with Mabel had been all perfected, and he had grown a thousand

times happier in the consciousness of her undivided love. They had spoken the sad syllables of parting—Mabel's eyes were glistening with tears—her lip quivered with emotion—she felt already far more desolate than she ever had before. This love of theirs, was a love at first sight; and it was quite as complete as it had been sudden. It would grow far stronger, too, from their separation.

Mr. Judson called to take his leave of the Jewsburys. The mother received him alone. The girls were not to be seen. He thought the reason of this was all plain enough, and determined to ask no unnecessary questions. Mrs. Jewsbury was cool, and reserved, and unusually dignified in her manner; making not the slightest allusion to Mabel, nor to the interest Mr. Judson had taken in her. Yet she could not but know all about it, too.

Leaving regards for the girls, he took a welcome leave. In an hour, he was two miles beyond the boundaries of the town.

— Scarcely a month had passed away, when Mabel found, much to her dismay, that her pupils were fast leaving her. She knew not how to account for this, yet she feared that she must have innocently committed some error. She sat alone by the hour in her school-room, and tried to thread the mystery. But the matter served but to perplex and sadden her the more.

All the time she kept it from Mr. Judson, though she was in constant correspondence with him. She knew that her income would soon prove inadequate to her support, yet, with a pride that would have driven her to suffer long and bitterly, she never thought of laying the subject of her wants before her accepted lover. He had himself, too, many a time given himself much thought respecting her impoverished situation, and inwardly felt the fears that told him she might then be at the mercy of her enemies. But he knew not how best to address her on the subject; and he would on no account have consented to wound her feelings. And thus the troubles thronged about her, threatening to drive her away from the village altogether.

She was sitting in her room, one evening, sadly thinking of her prospects. The very assurance of Mr. Judson's love, only heightened her sadness. It seemed to her a wealth that had no power to relieve her when in the deepest need.

Her drawings lay scattered over the table; several well-used books were close at hand; the window was opened; and the light wind of early autumn was drawing through. The same expression of sadness was upon her beautiful face. The same drooping of the eyelids betokened the secret sorrow. She had been laboring to find fault with all her actions, to determine what one it was to which

she might refer her present condition. Shadows were fast stealing in through the windows, and had already nearly filled the room. They were her only company.

She was suddenly awaked from her reverie by a tap on her door. She called out to her visitor in her lute-like voice, and the door swung slowly open.

Mr. Judson entered, and stood before her!

Uttering a wild cry, she hastily rose and fell into his outstretched arms.

They sat down together in the gloaming, and repeated their vows again, and again, and again. And as soon as Mabel's heart could bear it, after she had freely given up all her griefs to her lover, he told her the story he had come so expressly to tell her. It was in few words, but full of meaning; and this was the meaning:—

Mr. Judson had accidentally become acquainted with the history of Mabel's father, though not, however, from her lips. He learned that the wealth of which the Jewsburys made such ostentation, only belonged to Mabel!—and of this important fact he had irrefragable proof. He had come to apprise Mabel of the unexpected change in her circumstances.

— Alternately she wept and laughed over the intelligence, but at length managed to compose her-

self sufficiently to allow him to make a visit to the Jewsburys themselves. To the mother he communicated this most unwelcome news. She was nearly insane at the proof of it. Mr. Jewsbury was dead, and Mabel's father had been long gone; there was no need to rake over old matters again. Yet the Jewsburys knew they were now *poor*, and the thought humiliated them. They might have winked at a misdemeanor; but poverty would seem to them to be a taint in their blood.

— So kind was Mabel's heart, and so sweet her method of punishment, that she freely offered Mrs. Jewsbury the home she then possessed, beside enough more to make her abundantly happy; and even then an ample fortune was left for herself. And to crown all, Mabel promised, and made Mr. Judson promise, too, that nothing of all this should be told in the village. It would cause needless pain. Then, for the first time, Mrs. Jewsbury made a clean confession. She told Mabel that she had herself raised public prejudice against her name, and thus robbed her of her scholars and her support. And in this way was she punished; by the generous kindness of the lone heart she would have gladly crushed.

— Mabel went to join her lover in town, where they were married at length. The sad heart of the girl had at last found its mate, and the shadow vanished from her beautiful brow.

THE POOR SCHOLAR.

DEXTER BRAND could not have been a year older than eighteen.

He was sitting in his pent-up little room one forenoon in May, reviewing his brief fortunes, and assiduously endeavoring to map out some sort of a future for himself. He knew well enough that he lacked not for earnestness and energy, and hesitated only in studying the particular direction in which they could be employed most successfully.

Dexter Brand was a young man, with dreams of ambition and high hopes of fame. Early an orphan, —without sister or brother,—he had been left to hew out his own ideas of life, and his own chances of good or ill fortune. Events, trivial and important, had combined to concentrate his thoughts on the single purpose of acquiring an education. He thought he could see the mortification and uneasiness men constantly experienced, who, after a lifetime of money-making, at length tried to extract enjoyment from their hoardings alone; and resolved,

cost what labor and denial the effort might, to first fit himself to enjoy something of more value than money.

A brave heart had young Dexter Brand, and as full of fresh and tender feeling as it was brave. What he determined upon, he tried to execute. The sense of his loneliness sometimes almost overpowered him; but his mind recovered its tone again, and his energies bounded as if the little room could scarce contain him. He painted the most glowing pictures of his future; dreamed the wildest dreams; raised his soul with thoughts of enjoying the sunshine of fortune; and fired his energies anew with the boyish contemplation of what men had accomplished for themselves, starting at a more obscure point than he.

He lived alone, in the oldest and oddest building known in all Hazleton. The house had long ago been bereft of tenants, and strong and tangled weeds resisted the claims of culture in the little garden at the back door. It was a low-roofed house, with a stooping doorway, and a chimney that occupied just one-third of its area. All sorts of wild wood-vines ran helter-skelter over the brown shingles, and dropped down over the eaves again in luxuriant bunches. Even from his little window, a view of the winding road could be obtained only by forcibly thrusting aside the lattice-

work of leaves, and peering through the thick shadows of the deep emerald.

On this reviving morning in May, Dexter Brand was sitting alone, as usual, in an uncouth arm-chair near his round table, with a book opened before him, and other volumes plentifully strewn about. There was no covering to the oaken floor, and no cloth to his hard table. There were, likewise, but two other chairs in the room,—and a little doorway betrayed the passage to his bedroom. Poverty came in and sat down in the room with him, and Dexter Brand welcomed his visitor. His spirit never chafed. He lost none of his life in fretting. The one purpose of his mind was set steadily before him ; and its realization could be effected only through silent and resolute endurance.

This morning he felt unusually sad and lonely. The fragrant breaths that blew in at the window, weaned his heart from his studies, and almost made him irresolute. He lifted his eyes longingly to the landscape, and let his gaze wander listlessly over it, until he lost himself in dreams of the dim blue beyond. His hands grasped his chair at first, but now dropped slowly into his lap. The balm of the air,—the sweet sounds of morning,—the thoughts of a dim and distant future,—all conspired to overpower his waking faculties. In a few moments he dreamed. A lone, friendless, ambitious youth,—

in a deserted old house,—with a few books, and scarce any furniture,—dreaming! It was indeed a scene for a painter.

What his visions were, no one could tell. They might have been of trial, and want, and wo. They were perhaps of the cruel buffetings of pretended friends, and of cowardly enemies who never strike but in the dark. Perhaps he dreamed of his sainted mother,—of her cheering and consoling syllables,—and of her undying smile. He surely *must* have dreamed of glorious prospects,—of increasing fortune,—of troops of friends,—of the fruition of his dearest hopes. Such dreams could not have kept themselves out of his brain. At length he murmured in his sleep: “I cannot! no, I cannot! It’s too hard! I must give it up!”

Could his heart have shrunk even then from the endurance of the stern condition of fortune? Was he wavering? broken with fear? hopeless? Had he dashed his purposes down in an empty dream?—those high and lofty purposes to whose attainment he had early pledged his lifetime!

“I’ve no more money! no friends!” So he muttered in his sleep: “It’s a sore trial! It’s all a war with life itself! I shall sink in the battle!”

Courage, Dexter Brand! courage! All you need now is a little more of that. Fortune has defied you at the outset; only look sharply in her face,

and she will warmly open her arms and welcome you at last. She delights in making cowards of us all. She likes the white lips, and vacant eyes. But courage! and you shall wring from her plentiful hand what you will.

It might have been a half-hour, on that balmy May morning, that the poor scholar slept in his chair. He was fanned by the freshest breezes, and invigorated by the incense of a thousand flowers. Yet he was *poor*! Yes,—as *men* call each other poor; but his heart was a treasury overflowing with wealth. So was his brain. He breathed the same air with the wealthiest landlords about him; while he was but the friendless occupant of a hovel. Before all worldly wealth was his to be reckoned. It could not be sold in parcels. It was inherent; indisputable; complete.

An oriole sat swinging carelessly on the lower bough of the great elm that dropped its shadows down upon the roof, and her voice was an unbroken gushing of melody. The very air seemed to vibrate with musical echoes. The echoes sailed into the current of his dreams, just as painted bubbles sail down the limpid surface of the water. Now his thoughts grew suddenly tempestuous. His fears seemed to have vanished, or changed into chimeras and shadowy spectres. The future took new colors. The skies had buried the clouds within their azure

depths. The gushing melody, so clear, so full, so intoxicating, with such multiplied echoes,—it at last awoke him. He opened his eyes in wonder, and looked abstractedly out at the window; as if it were some great wrong, that he had so far forgotten himself as to fall asleep in the glare of broad day. Then he gazed about the room, and still wondered. At length his eyes dropped to the table before him. There was his big lexicon, still wide open. Yes, but something more. He looked closer, leaning down his head. A note lay across the page! He took it hurriedly in his hand, and examined the superscription, not without sensation. It was in a lady's hand, and directed properly to him. How wildly beat his heart as he traced the letters! He could scarcely nerve himself to the task of breaking the seal; so great was his wonder.

The opening of the mysterious letter betrayed the enclosure of a bank note, of the value of one hundred dollars. The poor scholar could hardly believe his eyes. He read. It was simply the desire of the writer that he should employ the amount enclosed in aid of educating himself, as he had originally purposed. No name was appended to the note, and no motive was betrayed for so strange a mode of rendering assistance. Nothing was expressed but an earnest desire that he should prosecute his studies with all his zeal, and depend upon

the fidelity of at least *one* friend. Tears instantly blinded his eyes; and his lonely heart became a psalm of thanksgiving.

The poor scholar took courage. His resolution was greatly strengthened. He bent to his lonely studies after this with new zeal, resolved to prove himself worthy of the confidence his unknown friend had reposed in him. The mystery of the donation served but to excite him to higher effort.

That same autumn he entered college, joining an advanced class. His progress was marked by stern devotion to duty, and eminent successfulness in his aims. None ranked higher in point of scholarship than Dexter Brand. His entire collegiate course was a scene of trials and triumphs. The same mysterious hand supplied his wants through the whole of his studies. After graduating from the university, he set at once about the study of the law. In this profession he had promised himself the proudest triumphs. And in a couple of years afterwards he was fairly admitted, and seated comfortably in his office chair, waiting for the opportunity to come when he should be permitted to draw his first brief.

Yet he sat not idly; only idly waiting. He labored still; as if he were already in the full tide of a successful and increasing practice. Day and night, late and early,—he was over his books. His

industry and earnestness were indefatigable. No principles, that he labored not to master. No rules, he did not determine to make familiar. No ordinary forms of practice, in which he did not design to make himself perfect. And slowly, steadily, but surely, there was growing up in him a strength of character, and a comprehensiveness of plan and purpose, that promised a rich fruitage in after time. Maturity was being born of labor, earnestness, and steadily-directed industry. And success was the certain result to which he would ultimately attain.

He was sitting in his office-chair, one fine spring morning,—almost such a morning as that on which he dreamed in his student-chair, in the old house,—turning his thoughts in this direction and in that,—now on one subject, and now on another,—when his door suddenly opened, and a lady entered. She was clad in deep mourning, and her head was partially bowed, as with grief. As she raised her face to that of the youthful lawyer, she betrayed an expression of settled sadness. Yet her countenance was faintly irradiated with a sweet smile, that added greatly to her native beauty. He instantly rose and handed her a seat. She at once, therefore, began her business with him. Her story, in substance, was as follows :

She had been left a widow only two or three

years before. with what, at the time, she considered an ample fortune. Her husband's will had bequeathed her the entire bulk of his property, after the few debts had been paid which were therein enumerated. Greatly to her surprise, she had been not long afterward informed by the two executors of the will, that her husband's debts scarcely left her a subsistence. After all these were paid, there were but two or three thousand dollars for her.

She acquainted the young lawyer with her suspicions that all was not as it should be. Debts had been brought forward against the estate, of whose existence she had had no suspicion. Her husband had gone through an enumeration of his liabilities, in his last will and testament; if, then, these new debts were honest ones, they branded his name with the infamy of deliberate and malicious falsehood. It was as much to vindicate his memory, as any thing else, that she was anxious to have a thorough examination made of the whole affair; and she desired, too, that it might be made without exciting the least suspicions of any parties concerned in the execution of the will.

Dexter Brand wondered, as well he might, at the motive that prompted this lady to consult with him on the subject, stranger as she was to him. But he was not at liberty to satisfy his curiosity by asking questions. The lady might have been

specially referred to him by some unknown friend. He knew not. At all events, she was young, beautiful, and fascinating in her manner and conversation; and these items were by no means without their influence upon the mind of the young lawyer.

He forthwith sat down to his table, and made a note of the various points given him by Mrs. Wells,—for that was the name of his fair client; and then carefully folded the paper and put it away in his pocket. The interview then terminated.

Dexter Brand's work thereafter was before him. He fell to it with redoubled energy, determined to gain a cause about which so much mystery was woven. Accordingly, he first went to the registrar's office, where wills were recorded, and made a careful and thorough examination of the document in question. Taking a copy of this, he returned to his office to think what should be his next best step. He threw himself back in his spacious chair and held the will before him, reading and reflecting by turns, for a long time. He sifted the whole matter to the bottom. There was not an aspect of the case possible for him to take, that he did not take. He viewed it on all sides, turning it over and over again in his mind. If there was iniquity discoverable, he meant to discover it. If that could not be done, he certainly could not be held

answerable for the opinion the lady must have of her deceased husband's veracity.

Frequent interviews between himself and Mrs. Wells thereafter ensued ; during which the young practitioner felt his heart rapidly yielding to the charms of her mind and manners. She likewise introduced him to her mother,—also a widowed lady,—who seemed from the first to manifest more than ordinary interest in him. The three together held long and frequent consultations respecting the case in hand, from each of which Dexter Brand went with increased confidence in the cause of his fair client.

At length, one fine morning, he closed his office-blinds, locked his door, and went on board a vessel bound for the West Indies. No one knew where he had gone, however, and no one suspected the nature of the business that carried him away. He was absent for about two months. The very evening of his return was passed at the residence of his client, whose now irradiated countenance seemed to betray the double satisfaction she felt at his safe arrival. His plan was at once laid open to her and her mother, and to all his suggestions their assent was unqualifiedly given. He assured them of his increased confidence in the justice of their case ; and, after a long evening, left them, to think more upon the purpose he had conceived. It was a long

night to him, and a sleepless one. He had got hold of his first important case. He meant to make the most of it.

— The court-room was crowded with spectators. The judge sat on the bench, and a semicircle of barristers hedged him in. Among the latter was young Dexter Brand. The case of *Mrs. Wells versus John Wilson and Edward Summerville*, executors of the last will and testament of the late husband of Mrs. Wells, was duly called. The plaintiff was in court, and so were the defendants. Mr. Brand, attorney for the plaintiff, duly opened the case, stating the object he intended to make plain, and the proofs he intended to bring forward. His speech was a brief and succinct narration of the various events connected with the settling of the will, superadded to which were a few pregnant hints in relation to his own version of the affair. That version he hoped to make clear to the minds of the jury he was addressing.

The counsel for the two executors of the will replied to the speech of Mr. Brand, indignantly repelling any and all insinuations thus thrown upon his clients, and warning the youthful practitioner of the responsibility he must take upon his shoulders, if such statements were persisted in.

"I do persist in them!" boldly interrupted Dexter

Brand, his brilliant eyes flashing fire with the words.

"Then we hold you to the consequences," replied the opposing counsel.

"After this trial is over, I shall find no difficulty in meeting them," curtly rejoined he.

There was a sarcasm in his tone, that made them feel manifestly uneasy under its sting; however, they strove to conceal all exasperation, and gave themselves to the case in hand.

Dexter Brand first read the will of the late Mr. Wells, offering it in evidence of all the debts there were, at the time of his death, outstanding against the estate. He then called on the widow to give up as much of her knowledge respecting her late husband's liabilities as he had, in life, acquainted her with. She readily testified to her complete knowledge of all her husband's business transactions, and to the recollection of having been told by him on his death-bed, that as all his debts were provided for in his will, he felt reconciled to know that he should be able to leave her an abundant competence. She likewise testified to her knowledge of the amount of his property; and added that she knew what of right belonged to her.

Several witnesses, likewise, were called on by Mr. Brand, who had known Mr. Wells for many years; and who freely testified to the known extent

of his property, his few debts, and the belief they entertained of his widow's being left with a large portion. They also gave in several items of information, which, while they were not essential parts of the testimony, at the same time very strongly corroborated the positions taken by the counsel for the widow. At this point, the plaintiff rested; though she claimed the privilege of introducing further testimony, if circumstances should render it necessary.

The other side called their witnesses. Again the will was read, and the debts therein enumerated were sworn to have been settled. But in order to make out their case, and to fortify their position, they charged that debts *heretofore unknown* were brought against the estate of Mr. Wells. They swore positively, that debts of magnitude existed, of which he had made no mention in his will, and none whatever, either, to his wife. In proof of this, evidences of speculation in sugar lands in the West Indies were exhibited, by which it was made to appear that Mr. Wells had nearly swamped himself in trades in real estate. They produced notes of hand, drawn by him in payment for these lands, and endorsed to Senor Loreto, a planter of wealth in one of those islands.

Thus far, all looked well for their case. They seemed to have abundantly made out that Mr.

Wells died with a falsehood on his lips. The jury instinctively looked round upon Dexter Brand, to see what step would be taken to relieve his client from the unpleasant predicament into which she was thus forced; but they witnessed no change in his features. He sat in his chair as calm as a summer's morning. He asked to look at the notes,—the evidences of Mr. Wells' debts in question. They were handed him by the opposite counsel. He looked at them a moment scrutinizingly, and then rose slowly from his chair and walked into an ante-room.

Presently he returned. This time he was not alone. A strange gentleman was with him. The eyes of the excited spectators, of the court and jury were fastened upon him and his companion.

He called upon the stand a new witness; the Senor Loreto himself, to whom it was sworn by the defense that the notes were endorsed. He stood before the court and was sworn. The opposite counsel made an effort to say something; but it would have been difficult, if not impossible, to tell what. The defendants gazed at each other; then at the witness; and then at each other again; as if in paroxysms of despair. But their lips were sealed together. The notes in question were handed to Senor Loreto. He took them and gave them a careful examination. Dexter Brand then asked

him if he had ever seen those notes before. He answered that he had not! He was asked if he knew the endorser. He had never heard of such a man; and never had had dealings with a man of such a name.

The opposite counsel rose in his seat; tried to speak; and then sat down again. The defendants again looked at each other fiercely; gazed at their counsel still more fiercely; and then betrayed in their countenances the fear and remorse that began to work upon them. This witness was thoroughly examined and cross-examined. But nothing further was elicited, that shook the strength of his main testimony.

The evidence being all in, the young lawyer followed the counsel for the defense, in his plea for his client, unraveling the whole affair, and asserting that he had made good the charges of which he spoke. Glancing proudly at his opponent, he assured him that he now and hereafter stood fully responsible for the statements he had seen fit to make at an early stage of the case; and that he was ready and willing to abide the consequences. The face of the counsel for the defense betrayed the manner in which the cutting irony was received.

The executors of the will, therefore, stood plainly convicted of *forgery*. They had forged these notes themselves; produced them as evidences of

debt against the estate of Mr. Wells; and afterwards divided, as was proved abundantly, the plunder between themselves. Mr. Wells had speculated in West India property, as they knew; and had had business with Senor Loreto; but in all these speculations he had been eminently successful, paying for everything and leaving nothing unpaid,—as that gentleman himself fully testified. The executors—who had been confided in always by the deceased, but who now so basely betrayed their trust,—were convicted and condemned already. And Dexter Brand—the penniless young lawyer—had done all this himself! Thus early did he give promise of his after reputation.

The property of the faithless executors was forthwith attached, and a suit to recover what they had embezzled, instituted. They were likewise brought up on a charge of forgery, and found guilty. Their sentence was soon after passed upon them, and they found long homes in the penitentiary for their base betrayal of the rights of the widow.

— Not three months after this memorable event in the life and legal experience of Dexter Brand, he found a *wife* in the same person in whom he had before found only a fair *client*. He was at once surrounded by troops of friends, as men who have newly come into such honors always are.

One fine morning in Spring—it might have been the anniversary of the day of his dream—the young advocate, his lovely wife, and her kind mother, were standing in the room of the old hovel, where he once labored for an education. He had purposely carried them there, to impress them the more with a sense of his early trials and denials. The bees swarmed about the windows as of yore, and the vines still clung affectionately to the old building. A breath of air blew in, and stirred the dust of years; so that it became long bars of gold in the sunshine.

“Mr. Brand,” said the mother of his wife, in reply to his allusion to the mysterious note received years before, while dreaming in that very room —“you would know more of that, I suppose?”

He looked at her a moment in deep amazement.

“I will break the seal of that mystery,” she continued. “It was *I*, who wrote that note and enclosed that bill.”

—— She explained that she was an early and intimate friend of his mother, whom she had promised that she would watch over her son’s footsteps with a motherly anxiety. She added that she had all along supplied him with money, with which to go on with his education. She had never doubted that it would all be repaid to her at some time, in some

inexplicable way. Yet she had never thought of that. She had tried only to fulfil the dying request of the young man's mother.

Dexter Brand was overwhelmed with confusion and gratitude. He bought the cottage where he had first begun his studies and ambition, and by the side of it was not long afterwards erected a fine country mansion. The poor scholar had reaped a rich reward for his labor, at the very threshold of life. Honors and emoluments came in thickly upon him afterwards.

THE VILLAGE FUNERAL.

I HAD been sitting in my little garret-study, one bright morning in June,—just long enough to become gradually contented with the thought of making an in-door day of it,—and was watching the dancing of the sunshine among the glossy walnut-leaves just beyond my opened window, or chasing, with my eyes, the little whirligigs that lifted the corners of my manuscript and pirouetted recklessly from corner to corner of the room, when my attention was suddenly arrested by a sound from without. I listened a moment. It came again, and again.

It was the bell of the village church, tolling out its melancholy melodies.

I knew at once it was tolling for a funeral. There was, already, too much to tempt me out of doors that morning, and this was an invitation I felt least able to resist; so placing my hat hurriedly on my head, I started off for the church. It gave me a walk of a mile, to reach the spot; but

that mile was one whose wayside was beset with pure pleasure.

When at length I reached the green, as the village common was called, there was already quite a large collection about the church, chiefly men, however. Some stood in the cool shade of the maples, conversing in low tones upon the event that had just occurred. Some even stretched themselves, at a distance, upon the grass; looking up at times through the canopy of leaves to the blue sky beyond. Some paced slowly to and fro before the simple little church, whose front was embowered in trees, and surrounded with a carpet of freshest and darkest green.

Presently a coffin, draped with a pall, was borne along by four stout men, and carried within the church. As soon as the religious exercises were concluded, the body was borne out again, and placed upon the bier that stood on the green turf before the door. The coffin-lid was thrown back, and the villagers gathered silently about it, to take a last look at the pale face of the dead. With the rest, I walked up to the side of the long, narrow coffin, and looked over its edge. I dared not meet those motionless features with a full look. I ventured only a glance, for I always dreaded the sight of a dead face; so ghastly, so expressionless, so productive of an unnatural and unhealthy fear.

Why is it that Death, while manifesting itself only by silence and stiffness, always strikes the soul of the beholder with such a terror? The instant my eyes fell upon that face, I started involuntarily backward. Without knowing it, I jostled rudely those behind me. What my gaze met, amazed me fearfully.

The body was that of young Mabel Green.

I had long known the sweet girl, and had many reasons for believing I was admitted to her intimate friendship. It was a shocking surprise to me to learn that she was dead; I did not even know that she had been ailing. Her prospects for a long and happy life I had considered quite as promising as my own. I had not thought of *her* dying. I should as soon have dreamed of dying myself; and that is an event few of us are prone to speculate upon.

When, at length, the lid was shut down again, and the mournful procession wound along at a slow and solemn pace toward the quiet place of sepulture, I turned to make inquiries relative to the cause and manner of the event, whose suddenness had overwhelmed me with grief. It was a brief story, and a touching one. It smote my heart, as with a rod of thorn, to listen to it.

Mabel Green lived in the village, with an aunt, who likewise was bringing up an only daughter of

her own,—named Ruth Finley. Mrs. Finley had lost her husband some years before, and had never since married. She retired within her own self chiefly, eager only to lavish all her devotion upon her child. As soon as Mabel's mother—who was Mrs. Finley's sister—died, Mrs. Finley proposed to Mr. Greene to assume the guardianship of his daughter, and to give her the same privileges with her own child. She promised to lavish her affections equally upon both of them. To this proposal Mabel's father assented very willingly. Accordingly, the two girls were at once placed together; and as affectionate as twin-sisters seemed they in a very brief time. Both attended the same school; both read the same books, at the same time; both pursued the same studies; and both seemed to make similar progress. Every one in the village remarked their affectionate intimacy. There was not one in that rustic little church, who did not listen more intently, each Sunday, to catch the mingled notes of the music-loving cousins.

Both were lovely. Both were accounted perfect—if there *be* such a thing as human perfection. Both had their friends—and they comprised pretty much the whole of the quiet little village. Both had their admirers—admirers, ardent and unwavering. If there was a difference, however, Mabel was *the belle* of the village; and it was the pleas-

anest sight in all the world, to see how gracefully her cousin admitted it. Not scornfully, nor reluctantly, as if she were unwilling to see merit or attraction in any one save her own self; but with a hearty sincerity, that savored of nothing so much as of truth, and love, and abiding affection.

— There came a young man into the village, about twenty months before the afflictive event of her death, named Granville Reed. He came to pay his attentions to Ruth, the cousin of Mabel; and Ruth had heard of his intentions, before he had even addressed her. He was from a distant city in the far West, and by occupation a merchant. It was with a fluttering heart that Ruth received him for the first time in the parlor of their snug cottage, for she had quite as much anxiety to know how he would appear to her, as had he to know how she would appear to him. It seemed that each was highly pleased with the other; more so than could have been naturally expected.

They sat for a long time together, when Ruth began to be concerned that her cousin Mabel did not make her appearance. She wondered why it was; and wondering, she excused herself long enough to go in quest of her. In a few moments she returned, bringing her into the presence of Mr. Granville Reed. But if Ruth had begun to be favorably impressed with the young man, it was

the most unfortunate step she could have taken to introduce him to her cousin Mabel. The young merchant was smitten with her, at first sight!

Poor Ruth! unwittingly she threw away her opportunity! But she had no heart of envy. There was not a single thread of jealousy running through all her generous and loving nature. If she had once thought of such a thing as Mabel's being at all in the way of *her own purposes*, at least she did not act upon the thought.

Time and the suit passed along. Mabel gave herself to be the bride of the young merchant. Her father had written favorably respecting him, in answer to inquiries she had herself made of him; and her aunt had acquiesced in her own choice. Ruth—poor Ruth!—she murmured not; she only prayed that “Cousin Mabel” might be perfectly happy in her new estate. Anything but envy felt she, to see Mabel so near her true happiness.

The day of the marriage ceremony at last came. It was a lovely morning in the month of May. The leaves were growing each day a deeper green; and the grass-sprouts were thickening all over the sward. Bees drove a-field, in quest of the early flower. Daisies were plentifully sprinkled over the grass, and stood lifting their mild eyes through every vale for miles about the quiet village. There was the music of the birds in the tree-boughs over-

head; and there was the soft sighing of the wind-spirits, as they swept past one's ears. There was a genial warmth, too, in the mellow sunshine; it thawed out the frozen feelings of the heart, and set them in calm, happy, and healthful action again.

By-and-by, the carriage in which rode the betrothed couple rolled along the street towards the church. All around the church door were crowds. Old and young turned out in the seductive sunshine, to get a fair sight of the happy pair. They elbowed and pushed each other excessively, as the carriage rolled over the soft sward to the church door. They were determined to unite their wishes and their prayers for the happiness of the expectant bride.

— They stood before the altar—the bridegroom with his bride. If *he* was accounted handsome,—there be those who are foolish enough to call men “handsome,”—*she* was a picture of loveliness. She stood by the side of her betrothed, clad in a garment of unsullied white. Her hair, which was as black as a raven's wing, was evenly parted upon the top of her head, and brushed smoothly down over her ears. Not a single ringlet was suffered to straggle from its fastening, to betray the wealth that was modestly and tastefully secreted. Her forehead was as white as Parian marble. Beneath her dark brows gleamed two eyes, of a deep

blue, and full of ardent and earnest expression. A smile of happiness played quietly about her finely shaped mouth, and lit up all her features. It even added a lustre to the eyes that almost seemed to speak. It made all involuntarily envy the happiness that seemed hers.

"Wilt thou have this man for thy wedded husband?" interrogated the patriarchal-looking man, looking into the enkindled eyes of Mabel.

"I will," was her musical and soft response.

Then they became—by the authority of the good man—man and wife. He said to them his blessing, and they pressed his kind hand, and again went away in their carriage. All that day they received the congratulatory visits of their friends—whoever they might be, throughout the village. The people flocked in to say to Mabel their parting words, and to offer kind wishes,—and then bade her farewell.

Poor Ruth's sky was well nigh desolate. The fires that had so long been burning on the hearthstone of her heart, were about to go out—to go out, perhaps, for ever. And she was saddened with the thought. The glistening tears struggled to her eyes, and insisted on rolling out from beneath the lids down her pallor-stricken cheeks. Her pretty lips quivered whenever she would speak; and her syllables were broken into meaningless

fragments when she would have made words with them.

— In a few short hours, the bridegroom had taken his bride away from the home she so much adorned, on her journey to the distant home he had provided for her. What a blank was left in that hitherto contented cottage! But Mabel *loved* Granville Reed, and for him had consented to give up everything with which the world had hitherto allured her heart.

I said it was to one of the Western cities she went with her husband. For some time her life there was as happy as it well could be. She tried to bury all regret at separation from her friends, in devotion to her husband. And she lived to know and to feel, that this devotion of hers was amply rewarded. The wealth of her husband's soul she felt to be all hers, even as hers was his.

In business he was prospered, even beyond his expectation. Profits flowed abundantly into his coffers, and he had full reason to think that his energy and enterprise, if unfalteringly persisted in, would finally secure a liberal remuneration. And *after* that—ah! how many schemers there be in the world, who are always prating of what they will do *after* they have amassed their fortunes,—in other words, after all *incentive* to do, shall have been taken away from them!

— But human calculations are as frail as human hopes. There is no more strength in either than in ropes of sand. The tempter came, and with him came the destroyer. There was a gang of counterfeitters who had been for some time operating in the vicinity of Granville Reed. They were, professedly, gentlemen; but gentlemen only in disguise. That disguise was but the worse for the young merchant. An influence that was openly vicious, he would have confronted with boldness; but an influence that presented itself to him under a bland and pleasing exterior, he was not strong enough to withstand.

Little by little he yielded to the solicitations of the leader of the foul nest. He loaned him money at first, to assist him in his enterprise. Then he advanced a certain amount—a triflingly larger sum—on his own account, in the business. It was made to appear to him a business that promised almost illimitable profits, while *his* risk would be just nothing at all. The others would be the ones to shoulder all the dangers and responsibilities, while he—Granville Reed—should punctually receive his proportion of the profits.

He was duped—entirely deceived. His desire for wealth grew so fast and so strong, that it outran his honesty and his better judgment altogether. He wanted nothing so much as he desired money.

He thought if *that* were once obtained, he possessed everything that was on earth desirable. Even his affection for his youthful bride deadened, in a degree; that is, it was superseded by a stronger affection for gold.

What a curse was that to him! Step by step, he went along in the unlawful path they had marked out. His profits from counterfeiting grew perceptibly larger every day, until at length he determined to relinquish his legitimate business almost altogether. Intrusting it to the hands of one or two hired assistants, he left his family—on pretense of urgent business abroad over the State—and became a traveling counterfeiter.

For weeks he sometimes stayed away from his home. His wife grew anxious for him; but she was made to believe that he was absent on necessary business—for *her* good as well as his own. Her heart was much worried; but what would that avail her? She must learn to bear whatever is imposed upon her. She must learn to kiss the hand that smites her. Her heart belongs to another; if that other one will chaffer with its wealth, and trade it away whenever it is not essential for his assistance—why, then, she must grow resigned, though she grow miserable with every effort to appear so! Such is the fate of many a poor, trusting girl's heart.

By-and-by—it was certain to come at *some* time—came the blow, the crushing blow, upon her devoted heart. The intelligence was brought her that her husband had been arrested, many hundred miles away from home, on a charge of being engaged with a band of counterfeiters!

— Then came the public trial. It was in a distant County in the State, and Mabel summoned the courage and energy to attend upon it. Her devoted affection forsook her not even then.

When she reached the place where the court was in session, she found a vast concourse of people about the village street, while all the avenues to the court-house were literally choked up. Yet her perseverance, as well as her appearance, served to gain her a comparatively easy entrance. She found her way into the court-room. It was blocked up with deeply interested spectators. There was not a murmur on the lips of one of them. So silent was the room, it startled her. But she pushed on. Men, on seeing her look so wildly, voluntarily made a passage for her slight form, and she found herself within the bar-railing. Turning herself about from this point, she ran her eyes over the assembled people.

It was but a moment's work. Her gaze fastened itself on the row of prisoners, railed in within the dock, and guarded by officers with their insignia

of office. From one to another it glanced, taking in the entire person with each look, until it finally fell upon the countenance of her husband. He was already gazing at her, with an appearance of stoicism that cost him an almost miraculous effort.

Uttering a wild shriek—she heeded neither the place nor the presence—she bounded to embrace him. At the dock-rail, she was kept back; but her guilty husband, whose heart was already pierced with thorns, leaned hurriedly forward, and caught in his hands the embrace that was thrown for him.

— Oh! if his heart did not bleed in that moment of keen anguish, it surely *should* have done so!

She was forcibly taken from him by the officers and spectators. When they finally carried her away to a room in the village inn, she was wholly insensible to the wretchedness that had so cruelly hemmed her in.

In due time she was restored to consciousness again. Her first thought was for her husband. Her first inquiry was for him. But she was not permitted to see him then. She could not be removed from her room. When next, however, she did see him, it was within the grated bars of a dismal prison. He had been sentenced to that place, there to expiate the wrong he had done society in his contempt of the laws.

She laid her head upon his lap, and said she *could not* live. She told him how deep had been her love for him—how strong, how abiding. And then the unwelcome reflection chased close upon the words—how wretched had proved the return of that affection. She said again, and yet again, that she could not live; there was nothing now for her to live for. And while accents of undying love, and confessions of never-ending affection, were yet fresh upon her pale, thin lips, she asked Granville at least to honor her memory, by reforming his life; and then she should die happy.

He promised—while deep sobs convulsed him—that he would at once reform; that he would never err again. But he begged,—he prayed,—that *she* would still cling to life with all her old desires; that she would continue to live upon the hope of his thorough reformation!

—— He asked *too much*. The treasure that had been given him on trust, he had first neglected, and then abused. Mabel died in his arms. Her last look was upon him. Her last syllable was of his name.

By his own direction, she was sent back—a corpse—to her old village home. It was buried the next morning after its arrival, and on that beautiful morning in June of which I have spoken.

— How strangely it all came over me! I had, in a moment, a thousand thoughts rushing through my brain. I wept for poor Ruth—for her who had so accidentally been spared the severe trial of the dead Mabel. I could hardly believe this was all that was left of my dear friend Mabel Greene; and her husband-murderer, at that moment, a convict in a Western Penitentiary.

It seemed more a dream than a reality.

TRACKS IN THE SNOW.

A N humble roof, laden with green and brown mosses, raised its modest height in a quiet valley.

There were no peaks to its gables, nor lattices to its windows; for the windows were few, and the gables numbered still less. Only a bunch of dried and lifeless vines nestled about the casements, and clung protectingly to the low eaves.

— *Poverty* brooded in that little home-valley.

Poverty and Winter!—Alas, what relentless companions and friends!

Yet had want not driven out all love for the Beautiful from the chilled hearts of the indwellers; neither had neglect and scorn quite withered all the leaves of the midsummer sympathies.

— There was a look of comfort, still warm upon the cold lips of Winter, lingering about the door-yard. Though the curl of the cottage smoke was as thin as a gossamer-cloud, yet it betokened warmth, and cheerfulness, and living gratitude

within. If the remorseless wind broke over the edge of the valley-heights, and piped shrilly at the crannies and key-holes of the doors, and blew chill gusts without number down the chimney,—still it seemed harmless in its cruel onsets, and its loudest shrieks only died away at length into melodious and dreamy lullabies.

A spirit of warmth was within and around that little dwelling in the valley, that no cold could ever freeze; a look of comfort, that no fierceness of the elements could abash and drive away; a glow of pure, ever-living sympathy, that would melt away all snows, of all depths.

— The far-off village clock sounded the hour of nine over the valley walls, on the night of the last day of the year. To many, these voices from the brazen-throated bell were full of joyful music. To many, they were the heralds of thicker pleasures for the coming year. Yet to many more,—oh, *how* many more everywhere!—were they dismal premonitors of fast-coming trials, and wants, and sore perplexities!

How *could* these bell-strokes ring the same music for all the hearts within its reach? The audible circuit they run, hemmed in other hearts than those that beat with unabated happiness. Within that circle, on this last night of the worn and weary old year, grim fears stalked in and sat down in the corners

of many home-hearths; and gaunt and greedy spectres held out their skinny hands for an embrace with many a widow and her sad-hearted children.

Just at the moment these nine clanging strokes of the bell fell on the ear of the Widow Russell, she looked wildly about the room in which she sat, and with an involuntary shudder drew nearer the flickering fire.

—— “Are you cold, mother?” asked a young girl, whose voice was as musical as the falling of crystal waters.

“No child; but ——”

The reply was not finished.

“Hark, mother! Hear it *snow*!” said the child, —herself of not more than nine years. “Hear it blow against the window-panes!”

—— The mother drew her offspring nearer to her, and pressed her head into her lap.

“Will the ground be covered by the morning, mother?” pursued the child, half raising her head, and gazing wonderingly into the expiring fire-flames.—“Will every thing be white,—as white as the walls, or as the sheets?”

“Very likely, my dear child,” answered the widow; but as she spoke, she shuddered again.

“Does the thought of the snow make you *cold*, mother?” continued the child. “Can’t you bear

to think of the white snow falling so still all through the night, when you know it won't fall on *us*?"

"Perhaps I shudder at my fears, child," replied the mother.

"Fears?"

"Yes,—but I should not tell you. You should not know, sweet Ruth."

"What fears?" persisted little Ruth, now gazing with an expression of sweet earnestness into her parent's face.

—— At that moment, a hot tear dropped from the widow's eyelid. It fell full upon the unstained cheek of the angel-child.

"Mother,—mother,—*what* fears?" now cried the trembling Ruth.

"We are *poor*!" answered the woman; and at these words the tears fell in rain.

"Poor? Is that all the reason why you cry, my mother?"

"Heaven bless you, child, and keep your heart ever as free as it is now!" cried the Widow Russell. "You know nothing yet, Ruth, of the trials of poverty. Every New Year's eve, my condition comes up to me more forcibly, and I feel saddened. These last nights of the year, child, have become to me so many anniversaries of my poverty. I must keep them all sacredly. Indeed, I feel that I

must. I see nothing now before me, child, but want,—no, nothing but *want!*”

“Mother!—*dear mother!*” again plead the girl affectionately with her.

“But you besought me to tell you all this, Ruth; and perhaps it is as well that you hear it now. Out of the work I can do the coming winter, I can just make out to live. But I am sadly in arrears for my rent; and to-morrow morning, I must pay the last quarter’s, or *leave the house!*”

“Where should we go, mother? You *can’t* leave the house! You hav’n’t anywhere to *go!*”—innocently broke in Ruth.

“Yes, child,” she replied, calmly.

“But where? *where*, dear mother? There isn’t a vacant house for us in all the village!”

“But that doesn’t enter the heart of *the landlord* I owe,” answered the quite disheartened widow.

“Whether we have a shelter or not, it matters little with *him*. It is justice for him to turn us out of doors, if he sees fit, at such a time in the year, but ——”

—— Her heart swelled. At last it overflowed. She could not go through the sentence she had begun.

The tears ran like rain down her heated cheeks, and she folded her child still more tightly within her arms;—as if the deepest cause of her anxiety

were, after all, but the truest source of her consolation.

She had no money, and she sank beneath the load of her little debt. Small as it was, it was full as heavy as the huge millstones that drag down so many, stronger,—far stronger than she.

She saw but a narrow means of support, through the long snows that were coming. Her oil-cruze was well-nigh exhausted, and the meal was but scanty upon the bottom of her barrel.—Yet these would insure herself and Ruth against absolute starvation.

She had a wood-pile high enough to melt away all the frost-work from her panes, and to drive out all the numbness from her fingers, and the chillness from her heart.—But *the rent* was unpaid! On the morrow she must meet that debt,—or she was a beggar!

—— Poor woman, indeed! How could she *help* pressing her youngling to her breast, and shedding burning tears of undivided sorrow!

The fire went out upon the hearth, and, with her child's head still close to her bosom, she prayed Heaven—silently and fervently—to “temper the wind to the shorn lamb.”

—— Thank God devoutly! Even such silent prayers,—that do not reach so much as the *lips* of the poor, but only ascend like fragrant incense from

the altars of their hearts,—even *such* prayers are heard!—and they go not always unanswered.

And as if to soothe her heart with thoughts of those other pale-faced ones who have suffered before her, she began a plaintive melody with her tremulous voice, and sang the child to a sweet sleep. And these were the words of her melody:—

The moon rode high in a cloudless sky,
On the last night of the year,—
Flinging off rays from her silver shield
Far over a pure and snow-white field,
Where the squadron winds both charged and wheeled,
And coursed on their circuit drear.

The moon was bright,—yet there gleamed a light
Through a distant latticed pane,—
Burning—burning all brightly awhile,
Then fading away like a dying smile,
As if the moon could its gleam beguile,—
Then steadily blazing again.

In a cabined room, where a cloud of gloom
Half stifled all the air,
Sat a pallid woman beside a child,
And while she kept stitching, she faintly smiled
On the upturned face,—so meek, and so mild—
As it were some angel-face there.

The work must be done by the morrow's sun!—
Who knoweth it better than she?
So her needle she plies with a sudden start,
In the hope to but finish her weary part,—
And a pang she feels in her widowed heart,
Of the sharpest misery!

The angel-child hath once more smiled
In the face of her mother dear,
And her arms are thrown up for a close embrace,—
As if she, poor child!—could for once efface
The line on the heart that is left by the trace
Of a burning—burning tear.

By the morrow's sun the work *was* done;
And through the latticed pane
There was streaming a single golden ray
Across the pallet where they yet lay :—
Mother and child had passed away
From the night to day again!

— All through that long night they slept,—
mother and child; slept as sweetly as those whose
beds were of down, and whose curtain-folds were of
damask. Their rest was as untroubled as the rest
of the rich, whose luxuries are often no luxuries to
them.

Dreams quite as rosy-tinted wreathed themselves
about their pillows, as sailed on the still night-air
to the heads of those less troubled than they.
Cares for the time they forgot. Out from the thral-
dom of anxiety they temporarily stole, into the
airiness of the beautiful and the unreal. Yet there
was no lack of reality in it all to them. They
basked and breathed in the sunshine of the warmest
hopes and fancies.

All night long,—while they slept, and while they
dreamed,—the feathery snow was silently falling.
All the night through, it sifted and sifted, without

so much noise as that of an airy sprite's footfall. All through those leaden, slow-motioned hours, it came sailing—sailing,—dancing and reeling,—flying and falling,—sifting and falling.

It lay spread out on the walk, and quite up to the sill of the humble door. It capped all the post-tops with white, as if they were gay hussars in costume for a masquerade. It piled itself up slowly in long and narrow lines along the fence, and lay packed in a little drift against the door. It flung over the fruit-trees in the garden a radiance as airy and pure, as if the unseen spirits of the storm would thus decorate the branches, and flower the sprays, ere they vanished again in their slight chariots of the wind-gusts. It covered the length and breadth of the little roof, as with an outspread blanket. It had kept falling—falling, and made long hillocks on each log of wood that was piled without the door.

The morning of the New Year dawned as clear as when first the word went forth—'*Let there be light !*' The earth was hushed like a sleeper. Slowly the gray streaks and streamers vanished in the eastern sky, and steadily the long, blood-red lines of morning came up above the rim of the horizon.

— What a vision met the eyes of the mother and her child !

The mother's countenance grew saddened, for her forebodings were many. But little Ruth's eyes sparkled and dilated with pleasure.

She flew impatiently to the window, momentarily oblivious of the cold fate, that, like this same chilling snow, was fast walling itself about her young heart.

There were no words, wherewith her childish ecstasy could be limited. Her own spirit, pure as the unsullied and untrampled snow itself, reveled gayly in the scene, bathing itself in the spotless fancies that rose like heavenly mists from it.

The entire surface of the snow appeared to her unbroken. All was rounded, and faultless, and pure. Her little heart was full to overflow with joy, and she danced in the thought of the bright New Year.

Her mother was at her side; but with what far different feelings! To and fro her eyes ran over the fearful picture,—fearful only to such as she—and she shuddered in spite of herself.

— Just as she shuddered the night before!

"*Tracks!* There are *tracks!*" suddenly exclaimed Ruth, pointing in the direction in which they were to be seen. "Who came here, last night, mother?"

She caught a hurried sight of them. She traced them to the gate—up the walk—quite to the little door.

Determined to know the whole of such a mystery, she went to the door and opened it.

—— It was already unfastened!

There, at the door-sill, the mysterious tracks had stopped. And a second time they were imprinted upon the walk, as by the return of the one who first made them.

Looking again,—this time behind the door,—she espied a box. She took it hastily from its hiding-place, and opened it at once. It was small, but it was filled.

There was *a roll of bank-notes* within, and across the top lay a strip of paper, on which was written

‘A HAPPY NEW YEAR.’

The poor widow burst into tears. She saw her rent-arrears now fully paid, and her wants all munificently provided for. Indeed,—indeed, it *was* a ‘happy new year’ beneath the humble roof of the widow Russell and her child!

—— On our every hand there be many moss-stained roofs; and the sifting snows fall silently through many a long and dismal night of the Winter.

—— And are there not many, who will leave *their* footprints in the snow before the doors of such cottages, while they likewise leave much more permanent impressions of their generosity within?

ASPS AND FLOWERS.

TWO young persons—lovers—were walking in a beautiful wood. It was nigh sunset, and a day in midsummer. The yellow sunlight seemed chastened and sweetly subdued, as it fell down through the clustering leaves, and wove cloths of bewildering gold in the tangled mazes of the forest.

Far before them was a carpet of moss and grasses; the latter thrusting up their slender spires at this hour like long rods of gold. The most delicious aromas sailed down the gentle currents of the wind, and the dreamiest sounds lulled their thoughts into a quiet that was almost as perfect as heaven. They walked slowly,—sometimes absorbed in thought, and sometimes conversing in low and confidential tones, as if in some spirit-tongue.

Little thought they of the surrounding circumstances that created this peculiar atmosphere for them. Though they were not insensible to their effects, yet they seemed to observe nothing of the material objects about them. They heard not the drowsy drum of the distant waterfall. The sharp

singing of the evening insect, as he clove the still air with his silver wings, went unheard and unheeded. They saw not the matchless changes of light upon the bunches of rich, dark leaves; nor marked the velvety look of the moss-tapestry upon the huge tree-trunks; nor felt the fresh wind-breaths that fanned their foreheads; nor heeded the melancholy, musical whirring of the frogs, upon the margin of a distant pool in the heart of the wood. They knew not of any of these things. They saw nothing, save only each other. And yet the influences of these objects and sounds were not lost upon them. Their souls drank them in; and their words became more impassioned; more tender; and more beautiful.

The young man was a lawyer; a mere novice in his profession; yet a person of fine intellectual endowments, and of generous sentiments and sensibilities. He had come on a visit to Mary Graham from town, intending to remain in the little village of Mapleton for a number of days. The most of his time was passed in her society, as a matter very much of course. They took many drives together, among the most picturesque places that Mary knew. She had many a chosen spot, around which her fondest feelings gathered and grouped themselves; and she seemed never to tire in witnessing the delight they gave him as well as herself.

There were drives across the hills; and down through the shadiest dells; where the spruce and hemlock interlaced their dark broad branches; and silent little brooks slunk away into the impenetrable recesses of the wood, swirling softly around old gnarled tree-roots on their mysterious way. There were sweet walks by the river side, and rude benches were placed beneath friendly trees, or beside luxuriant vines. On these they sat, in the fullness of the summer's day, and watched the steady flow of the little river; giving up their senses to the most delicious reverie; letting their thoughts sail down and away upon the glassy wavelets; drinking in evanescent influences with each wind-gust that stirred among the vine-leaves around them; or gazing lovingly into each other's eyes, until the silence,—the influence,—the place,—the solitude, assured them that all earthly joy was theirs.

— Alas, for the asp,—the poisonous adder,—that coils and sleeps among the green leaves, or beneath the ripe fruit! Each hour has its own wo, as surely as hath each rose its thorn.

On the night to which I have made allusion, the two lovers passed from their canopied walk in the wood, and crossed the river on the frail bridges that spanned the stream. They continued their stroll until they came to one of these rustic seats

by the river, and here sat down. The scene was surpassingly lovely. It seemed never to have offered them so much of beauty, both seen and unseen, before. For some time, neither of them spoke. It was an hour of serene happiness. The lovers felt the power of the golden link that united them so mystically.

Their hour was protracted; and when they rose to go, the dusky shadows were thronging around them from the woods. Sauntering slowly, and as if regretfully, up the lane, they reached the open road that conducted them to the gate of Mary's home. Her companion bade her good-night at the gate, promising an early call in the morning. And the lovely Mary Graham bounded joyously into the house.

"The postman has gone by since you have been out," said Mary's sister,—a little girl of but ten summers—"and brought you this letter."

Mary took it eagerly from the child's hand, and closely scanned the superscription. It was in a gentleman's hand, and one not at all familiar to her. She looked at the post-mark. It was that of the metropolis. Not daring to trust herself to break the seal in the presence of any one, she instantly

retired with the strange missive to her chamber. Throwing herself back in a huge arm-chair that still stood by the open window, she proceeded to open the letter with trembling hands, and an unwonted fluttering of the heart. It was already twilight, and the shadows of evening were gathering about the casement. Yet her excitement was so great, she thought not of the feeble and failing light. She was able to faintly trace the written words, and slowly and thoroughly read the letter through.

It must indeed have been a strange production, if one might judge by the effect it manifestly begot.

The young girl instantly threw her head far back in the cushion, leaving the open letter still lying in her lap,—and clasped tightly with each hand the arm of her chair. A hot and burning flush overspread her forehead, her cheeks, and her neck; her heart throbbed so that she could distinctly hear its deep pulsations in the evening silence; her eyes wore a wild and half-insane expression, as if she were struggling with some fearful, dreadful thought in her burning brain.

She sat in this position for nearly an hour; neither the cool breaths of the evening air, nor the subdued music of the summer insects, sufficing to calm the perturbed flow of her spirits. The longer she sat there, and the more she thought upon the

contents of the letter, the more deeply bewildered became she. There was something terrible in it. Its words scorched her brain, though she could scarcely trace them in the gathering shadows. And now that it lay open in her lap, flung away from her as it were, she seemed to feel it as a dreadful presence; capable of cankering all her happiness; breaking her brittle hopes with a vandal hand; pushing her fears to the verge even of insanity; and walling in her vision on every side with a thick bank of darkness. The room was desolation itself to her. The cool air that drew in through the window, fell like a deathly chill upon her bared shoulders. The sounds out of doors were all dismal and foreboding.

—— What a change had been wrought in that single heart by a letter! and from an unknown writer, too! There was no signature; nothing but the post-mark gave indication whence it came.

Mary Graham was never so undecided what to do. The oftener she made the attempt to determine what step to take, the more incapable she felt of taking any step at all. The fever grew more violent within her, the longer she thought the matter over. And after sitting for a long time alone in her silent chamber, and after pacing hurriedly to and fro across the floor, she at length retired to bed, hoping thus to calm the deep agitation that ruled

her. But as the hours wore away, and midnight advanced, she was still as far from a decision as ever. She tossed feverishly upon her couch, and pressed her forehead with her hot, dry palms. The room seemed full of flitting phantoms; but not one was there that could soothe her nerves, or disentangle the ensnarled emotions that wrought so terribly in her breast.

Morning came; but with it dawned no new joy. Even the old thoughts of pleasure rose not with the red sun, to lighten her path through the day that was before her. She had formed her resolution, through the passage of those gloomy night-hours; and no sunlight of the returned morning could drive out the dark sorrows from the recesses of her heart.

She went down stairs and ate her breakfast as usual. Her mother remarked an uncommon sadness in her countenance, but Mary parried the observation by some trifling speech of her own, to the effect that she had rested but little through the night. How truthfully she spake! But there was a secret cause behind that.

After breakfast, she went back to her chamber again. She threw herself in her capacious arm-chair by the window, and fell to musing. Her eyes roved among the green leaves of the fruit-trees that shaded her window; and lingered upon

the tulips, and hyacinths, and periwinkles, and the flowering honeysuckles that clambered to the piazza roof. Yet none of these objects offered her sight their wonted beauty. She gazed idly at them, as a child looks in the images of some sudden day-dream. For her ears the waterfall had no music, as its subdued beat rolled up through the copse that skirted the hither side of the river. There was no melody in the music of the morning birds, that perched on the cherry and plum trees in the little garden, and warbled their matin songs. The sky itself was sombre and saddened; and the air, fragrant as it was with the incense of a thousand flowers, offered not the least balmy breath to her nostrils. While she sat thus mopingly in her chair, a light step was heard upon the piazza below her, and there came a tap at the door. In a moment afterwards, her little sister presented herself in the chamber.

"Mr. Nelson is down stairs," said she, in a low voice, which itself betrayed her childish heart, "and wishes to see you this morning, Mary."

"Well, come here," replied Mary, not moving from her chair. But her face was never so livid before.

The little girl approached her sister.

"Well," said Mary, "you must tell Mr. Nelson what I tell you. Will you promise me?"

The child looked up wonderingly from out her large blue eyes at her sister, and replied,—“Yes.”

“Tell him,” said Mary, her lips quivering with the emotion that stirred her, “that *I do not wish to see him!* I will not come down to see him!”

Little Nell looked more affrighted than ever. She continued gazing in her sister’s face, as if waiting for another explanation of so fearful a mystery. But nothing met her look save that same glare of determination,—half defiance, half sorrow,—yet determination binding the whole together as with iron bands.

“Nell, do as I bid you!” again spake Mary, in a more imperious tone.

The child had half a mind to burst into tears; but the greater mystery of the matter controlled her childish grief. She left the room with a heavy heart, and performed her errand faithfully.

What were Mr. Nelson’s feelings on the reception of such astounding intelligence, cannot be accurately told. He was at first too much thunder-struck to make any reply at all; and Nell continued in the room, as if she instinctively thought it her duty, if it were possible, to break the force of his great sorrow with her infantile presence. She possessed the heart of a woman, even at her tender years.

He at length collected his senses sufficiently to

request little Nell to go back to her sister, and ask the *reason* of her sudden refusal to see him. The girl went at once.—He was alone. His head swam. His senses sickened. He saw only darkness around him. A fear that he might suddenly faint and fall to the floor, possessed him. His love for Mary was so fervent, that death seemed the necessary consequence of its disruption. O, what a *fearful* moment lay between the child's going and returning!

Nell brought back no explanation of her sister's sudden determination; only a repetition of her cruel refusal to see him at all. He rose from his seat, and left the room and the house. His heart was full to overflowing,—nay, to breaking. But he controlled his emotion, and walked thoughtfully down the path to the gate. An hour afterwards, while Mary still sat at her chamber window, she saw Mr. Nelson's carriage rolling rapidly down the road. She was in the same clear sunshine, and amid the same fragrant flowers, and surrounded by the same entrancing music of birds, and drowsy hum of bees; but still she was not the same Mary Graham she once was. There rested a shadow on her heart. It darkened her countenance. It shaded the look of her eyes, as it were a thick cloud.

Thus were these youthful lovers mysteriously separated. Only yesterday, they were happy; to-day, none more wretched. And a sheet of paper,

—a few carefully traced lines, had sufficed to do this work !

— A cold night in December had set in. The air was full of indications of snow, and the lights in the streets burned dimly,—the tall posts that supported them looking like vapory giants, each with a single eye, dull and red. The streets were but little frequented, a solitary carriage, or dray, rattling dismally away in the distance. Everybody seemed to have deliberately shut himself in-doors, as a matter of choice ; save only those wandering children of stern-faced poverty, whose melancholy petitions could no more soften the walls by night than by day.

In one of the most aristocratic streets of the town, there was an unusual bustle. Carriages were coming and going ; passengers were being continually brought up to the curb-stone and set down ; and people were sailing in groups and squads,—ladies and gentlemen,—up a moderately long flight of granite steps. A flood of light fell upon the sidewalk from the door, and explained the cause of all this assemblage and confusion.

The rooms of Mr. Wilson's residence were radiant with light and beauty. The thronging company gathered in gay knots at every point and angle, come to offer their congratulations to Miss Anna Wilson on the returning anniversary of her birth-

day. Satisfied pride and pleasure gleamed from every countenance ; but from that of none so much as of the beautiful Anna. She felt herself a queen. Her appearance in the midst of her guests was remarkably dignified and stately, for one of her years, and she impressed all with the sense of her personal grace and charms.

There was gay discourse in companies ; pleasant tete-a-tetes ; charming rejuvenation of old associations and sympathies ; and wreathing smiles, that shed sunshine all around. There were strains of music from the sweet-toned harp ; and melodious voices entranced the listeners. Anna Wilson herself was the observed of all. She was a fresh bud of beauty. The richest colors blended and melted in her cheeks, and seemed like many-hued clouds, chasing over the face of heaven. Her eyes were large and dark, delicately shaded by arching brows, and fringed with long, silken lashes. A simple orange-flower was fastened in her raven hair, looking strangely pure by contrast with its dark masses. She was clad in the height of taste, and few jewels glittered upon her person. It seemed fit that it should be so, on this night of her birthday anniversary.

Mr. Nelson, the talented young advocate, was among the company that night. Though he did not appear wholly at his ease, yet he labored to

counterfeit complete enjoyment. A shade lay across his marble forehead,—that forehead that seemed so much paler than usual,—and his locks looked more than usually dark against its pallor. Yet he wrestled with his fate, and grappled with the terrible thoughts that rose in his mind, as if he must crush the life out of them if he would himself live.

Anna seemed uncommonly anxious to secure his company to herself as much of the evening as was possible; and often offered to receive his arm for a promenade about the parlors, or through the spacious hall. She had succeeded in withdrawing with him, after a time, to a deep recess, formed by one of the windows, from which opened a conservatory of rare plants. They stood at this window for some time, apparently engaged upon an examination of the beautiful exotics that there exhaled their fragrance; but, in reality, absorbed in an altogether different occupation. Anna was dexterously sounding the heart of her companion with soft tones, bewitching glances, and musical words; but he was striving only to quell the rebellion that was going on within. She plied him with the most artful questions, or attempted an impression by the most irresistible looks. She was ambitious and proud. Nay, her pride was her ruling demon; a monster, that had secreted himself in a nest of buds

and flowers. Yet to all her speech, and to all her hints, and glances, and bewitching smiles, he ventured no betrayal of his hidden feelings. Her beauty only seemed to sadden him, as it raised images in his mind of the beauty that had gone down in a cloud from his vision, perhaps forever. No word of hers,—no love,—nor glance,—nor look, could reach his heart. It was hermetically sealed to all such influences. Its chords refused to vibrate beneath the sweep of her proud purposes.

They were still standing in this recess, and their hearts were thus stirred with opposing emotions, when the sound of an approaching footstep caused them both to turn suddenly in the face of the intruder.

"Excuse me, Miss Wilson," remarked a young gentleman, whose name was Mr. Williams,—“I wish you very much joy of this new return of a favorite anniversary. I have not before been able to offer you my congratulations.”

Anna received his complimentary speech with a graceful inclination of her head and a gracious smile; whereupon he led forward to her a beautiful young girl, and introduced her.

"I believe I received permission from you, Miss Wilson," said he, "to escort hither this evening, a lady with whom you do not happen to be acquaint-

ed. Let me offer to your friendship *my* friend, Miss Mary Graham."

— At the sound of these syllables, Anna turned suddenly pale; and Mr. Nelson was seized with violent trembling. A dizziness was upon his brain, and he saw nothing that was around him. His eyes were as glass. A beaded perspiration instantly broke out upon his forehead and temples.

Anna's emotion, however, was the more mysterious. Yet it was scarcely less visible than his. She could utter but a few general words of welcome to Miss Graham, and that was all. Mr. Williams, likewise, would have introduced his friend to the young advocate; but he did not happen himself to have any acquaintance with him. Mary placed her arm within his, and moved slowly away; yet not until she had thoroughly observed for herself the sad plight to which her unexpected presence had reduced her former lover.

"*He loves me still!*" was her mental ejaculation, as she turned from him. Yet she could not crush the thought that she might never meet him again.

— Mary was staying in town with her particular friend, the sister of Mr. Williams, and by as strange coincidence of fortune, good and bad,—was introduced that evening to the assembly at Anna Wilson's. She had hardly retired for the night,—anxious,

excited, and pale,—when she began to revolve the whole matter carefully in her mind.

Mr. Nelson was pale, agitated, and apparently wretched. He could not refuse to recognize her, as she was introduced to Miss Anna Wilson, yet his look gave her deep and unspeakable pain. Whatever might be the cause of her sudden strong aversion to him, the tenderest associations still hung about the fleeting memory of their better hours.

And then, why this surprise and pallor, and apparent fear,—in the manner of Miss Wilson? It was strange. It perplexed her. She saw not why *she* should be so unreasonably startled by the simple mention of her own name. The occurrence aroused her astonishment at first, and then her suspicions. And the longer her thoughts dwelt upon it, the more became her suspicions grounded, and strengthened, and confirmed.

It was a long and restless night for poor Mary Graham,—quite as much so as that on which the fatal anonymous letter had been placed in her hands. She slept but little. Her thoughts were upon the meaning of the strange conduct of Miss Anna Wilson, at the time she was introduced to her by her friend, Mr. Williams.

At day-dawn her determination was taken again. She was greatly given to forming strong resolutions, and then of stoutly adhering to them; and this

was one of that character. She never thought herself other than honest in her purposes; and she therefore pursued them with ardor and zeal. .

When breakfast was over, she despatched a note to the office of Mr. Nelson, requesting the favor of an interview at the earliest hour possible. If she had been guilty of an unintentional wrong to him, she would hasten to make the fullest reparation.

The young advocate received her message, and in less than two hours was awaiting her presence in the parlor. She entered at length, and the lovers accosted each other. Mary was distant and dignified. She was not cold, or haughty; but her manner was rigidly self-possessed, and a severe check had been imposed upon her feelings. All her old memories were for the moment buried; and with a strong effort, she managed to maintain her womanly composure.

The young man was embarrassed and excited. He had not forgotten,—he *could not* forget,—the love that yet lived in his heart for the girl before him; and his emotions were almost uncontrollable. He bit his lips. His forehead grew flushed and pale by turns. His eyesight failed him for a brief moment. And he looked again; and saw the being of his devotion in his presence.

In a collected manner, and with as few words as possible, she narrated to him the cause of her ab-

rupt refusal to see him again. She spoke of a letter she had received that night, after their walk by the river and in the woods; the contents of which decided her never to see him more. At the time, she felt unwilling to give him her reason, although she had had cause since to regret the hasty step she had then taken. She assured him she was now anxious that he should himself see the letter, and answer or explain its contents, if it was within his power.

Drawing forth the mischievous production—she advanced, and handed it to him. He opened and read it carefully through. During the perusal, his eyes snapped, and glowed, and brightened, as if his brain was burned with the letters he traced upon the paper. His face flushed, till it was as red as a living coal; and then a pallor, as of death, overspread it, until it seemed that he must swoon from excess of deep and excited emotion.

When he had finished the reading, still holding out the letter in his hand, he said to Mary, in a choking voice:

“My dear Mary, this explains all.”

“How?” interrupted she, quickly.

“Had I seen this letter before, I would have cleared these matters up. I know under what a load of obloquy I have labored so long in your

sight, but I am certain that I can cast it all off. Is it your wish that I make the attempt?"

"Mr. Nelson," calmly replied she, although she was calm only with an almost superhuman effort—"Mr. Nelson, this is the only barrier that has ever been interposed between us. Only break this effectually down, and I receive you again into my heart, where you have ruled and reigned so long."

"This is an *anonymous* letter," said he; "a cowardly, assassin-like letter. The hand-writing is that of a man. I think I recognize the individual in his hand. He was too cowardly to affix his name to such a malicious document as that. Do I have your permission, Mary, to take this with me to my office?"

"If you think by any means you can clear these charges up," she answered.

"I will be here before dinner!" he exclaimed; and he took his hat and hastily left the house.

Mary was left to her own sad and wild thoughts. She had made a confidant of her friend in this matter; but no words from another could allay her deep agitation.

Mr. Nelson returned to his office and equipped himself for a visit to one of his gentlemen acquaintances. He was laboring under a fearful excitement, and felt scarcely capable of complete self-control. He was on the point of opening the door

to go out, when it was opened suddenly from the outside, and a gentleman entered.

"Good morning, Nelson!" saluted the visitor, a young man of not more than five-and-twenty years. "Are you fairly over the party of Miss Wilson's last night?"

"Mr. White," said the young advocate, drawing his form up haughtily, "I have a serious word for you. I wish you to look at that letter, and tell me if it is in your hand?"

His visitor entered, and took the letter from his hands. He glanced at its contents, and, hastily satisfying himself of their character, replied unhesitatingly that the writing was his own.

"Now I want an explanation of it," calmly, but resolutely continued Mr. Nelson.

"There is something wrong here, I *know*," answered Mr. White. "I am sure that I never knew what the letter meant, or for whom it was destined. Least of all, did I expect ever to see it in *your* hands. But I will explain.—I called on Miss Anna Wilson one day last summer, who requested a special favor of me, as she said, while she likewise took especial pains to enjoin secrecy. She produced to me a letter in her own hand, which she said she was anxious for me to copy. She neither told me its object, to whom it was going, nor to whom it applied. I supposed it, at the time, to be

nothing more than some playful design she had in view. I at once sat down by her and copied it. Now let me ask how *you* came with it; and how it is made to apply to *your* case."

The young lawyer was astonished almost beyond expression. At length, however, he told the story of the mischief it had already done, and said that he now understood its whole object and purpose. The two gentlemen were more friends than ever; and their examination of Miss Anna Wilson's disposition was any thing but flattering to the character and pretensions of that lady. The matter was at once explained to Mary. She now comprehended all, and was satisfied. She told Mr. Nelson of the suspicion Miss Wilson's conduct had excited in her mind the evening before, to the force of which he assented in full.

— Mr. Nelson himself took the letter to Anna, and unraveled to her the plot she had been so carefully weaving, under cover of an anonymous letter. She knew, it appeared, of his preference for Mary, and had thus determined, by a fabrication of the grossest charges, to ruin him in that young lady's opinion. After that, she fancied her own way to his heart both easy and direct. She protested; she denied; she wept violently; and she affected convulsions; but Mr. Nelson stopped not until he had gone through the whole story.

And in the midst of her terror, he left her to her reflections. He made no complaints; he only told her his knowledge of the plot, of which he had made so timely a discovery.

—— It was not three months after this disclosure, so fraught with disgrace to Anna Wilson, that the marriage of Mr. Nelson and Mary Graham was celebrated; and she moved at once into town, to ornament the society in which her husband was wont to move.

It was too severe a blow for Anna. She seized upon a sudden opportunity to marry; and, full of mortification, rather than happiness, left the metropolis on her wedding-day, to take up her residence in a distant city.

A FROLIC WITH FORTUNE.

"**E**LLLEN, did you know that this is St. Valentine's Day?"

"True, Bella; so it is. How strange I had not thought of it before!"

"And I have not yet selected a Valentine for the year!"

"Nor I, Bell; indeed, I had quite forgotten all about it. I had not thought the day so near; and here it is, right upon us!"

"Perhaps it is not too late even *now*?"

"Very well; I leave it with you, Bell."

"Do you? Well then, I have a plan. See here!"

— The two young girls between whom this short thread of conversation had run, were at the time seated in the cosey little parlor of a country clergyman's house, in a pleasant village of New England.

The bright sun flooded the room with its morn-

ing light, and irradiated the fair faces of the speakers with a look of joy. The earth was an unstained field of snow,—the steady storm of the night being succeeded by a morn as serene and clear as that which first dawned on the creation. The trees in the yard bore heavily of their unsullied fruitage, their branches and light sprays bending far down beneath the burden. The whole scene was beautiful; the more serenely so from the holy silence that brooded, dove-like, over everything.

Bella was the only child of the Reverend Mr. Bellingham,—and he, her only living parent. Endowed with qualities of beauty sufficiently singular to attract attention from those to whom such possessions first recommend themselves, there was likewise a grace,—an impulsiveness,—an inexplicable charm in her manner, that much transcended her other qualifications, and gave her person a radiant beauty peculiarly their own.

In the matter of intellectual endowment, she could boast even of profuseness. Her mental qualities were quick, ready, and brilliant. The life of her soul sparkled and shone in her deep, dark eyes, above which was a brow for a handsome woman to boast of. It was not high,—prejudicing the beholder with the idea of a woman all intellect and no heart; but broad and well proportioned,—its

full and balanced developments suggesting only a thought of calm strength, and unruffled purity and peace.

Thus far had Bella received a careful education, both at the hands of well-paid instructors and of her father. Early had her mind been impressed with the serious duties of affection and obedience; and with pious paternal care had the links of that golden chain been riveted, which was let down to draw her gently up to her true destiny.—Yet there was a secret germ in her heart; so minute that even her father's microscopic vision could not detect it; yet so full of vitality, that hands much more active than his could not effectually have uprooted it. In other words, the heart of the good clergyman's daughter was imbued with an elf-like spirit of frolic and gayety, such as soon began to bring to light all the hitherto hidden recesses of her character. Her temperament was tinged with an impulsive ardor, and, withal, she was not altogether a stranger to quite romantic sympathies and dreams. Anything that had the first hue of real romance, possessed for her an immediate interest and importance.

Yet with all these qualities of mind and heart, she was a girl of much more than ordinary firmness of character. People were in the habit of saying that this was but a rightful inheritance from

her father. That father was a man naturally of the rigid, Puritanic stamp; not only carrying his influence properly with him into his pulpit of a Sunday, but likewise wearing it about him through the other six days of the week, just as he wore his ordinary clerical garments. He was himself governed—and he generally governed others—by an iron will and an indomitable purpose. And as a matter quite of course, he possessed great weight of character the country round. His parish was made up almost entirely of wealthy and aristocratically inclined persons, whose individual characteristics had been firmly welded together by the active and superior power of their strong-minded minister. So that the little New England village of Woodlawn held up its head quite as high, in the matter of pretensions, as almost any corporate city within the limits of her six sovereign States.

Ellen McLane was Bella's companion in the parlor of the parsonage, on this golden morning of St. Valentine;—a girl differing not much from the latter in point of years, yet much more cool and collected in her judgment. She was Bella's warm and tried friend. Indeed, the two girls seemed as inseparable as sisters. Together they had plucked the flowers from many a fleeting hour, and together sat down to make rosy wreaths out of their sweet remembrances. And it was on one of these genial

re-unions that the conversation turned, as I have begun to relate, on the subject of a Valentine.

—— “See here! See here!” cried the overjoyed Bella, her eyes dilating with pleasure, and her whole countenance glowing with a warm expression.

She snatched a pamphlet from the table, and held it up triumphantly before the eyes of Ellen.

“Pray, what have you got there?” inquired the latter, not at all surprised by this very common impulsiveness of her manner.

“A College Catalogue!” said Bella;—“out of *this* we will each of us find a Valentine! What say you to it, Nell?”

“What a capital idea!” responded Ellen.

“But just let me tell you, Nell, how we will proceed. We will look through the whole list of these names, and you shall select the one that best suits your fancy, while I do the same for myself. After we have gone through all, I will shut the book, and we will each tell the other what name has been selected.”

“I agree to it!” quickly replied Ellen.

The two girls fondly twined their arms each about the other's waist, and for a considerable time were intently engaged in poring over the pages of the Catalogue.

It would have been extremely interesting to

watch the varied expressions that successively chased each other, as in some magnetic circuit, over their blooming countenances. Throughout the whole, too, there was a play of excitement over their features, and more especially within their eyes, that greatly heightened the charm of their expressions.

The long lists of names were at length gone through. The book was closed, and the white hand of Bella laid authoritatively upon the cover.

—— “Who is it?” asked both girls, in one and the same breath.

“What is *your* name?” questioned Bella.

“Henry William Sterling,” readily replied Ellen.

“Fudge!” exclaimed Bella.

“But why ‘fudge,’ Bell?”

“Oh,—such a *common* name!”

“True enough; but it is at least a *sterling* one,” retorted Ellen, gleefully. “Now for *yours*, Bella! What is it?”

“Alphonze Wildebrand. There’s a name for you, Nell!”

“I should think so. *Italian*, too!”

“Yes, *Italian*. It wasn’t *I* who was going to select one of your common American names! Besides, there is a *mystery* here about this person. I know nothing at all of *his* early history; while the lives of all Americans are pretty much alike. I

know nothing about his family. I cannot even imagine how he should find his way here to a College in New England, from far-off Italy. There's a *romance* here, Nell,—believe me!"

"And that's what *suits* you," returned Ellen, pleasantly.

"Well, but no matter. Here are pens and ink, and there is note-paper. Will you sit down and write your Valentine now? There is a volume of poetical selections,—'beauties,' I believe they are called,—and you can glean from them what seems most apt for your purpose."

"Yes,—but then what will you do? This is your only book."

"*I?*"—and Bella could not conceal the roguish smile that broke out at the corners of her pretty mouth,—“Oh, trust me for that! I am going to give my friend, Mr. Alphonse, some of *my own* rhyme!"

"But I am not so gifted as you, Bell. I shall therefore content myself with employing the language others have prepared for me.—Which is the book?"

— Instantly both the frolicsome friends began their task; Bella all the while laughing till the room rang with the echoes of her musical voice, and Ellen growing more and more confused in proportion as Bella became noisy and collected. And

it would have wreathed the most ascetic face with sunny smiles, to behold the pitch of merriment to which they had temporarily wrought themselves;—not altogether by words and tangible expressions, but by the slightest nods,—the hastiest exchange of playful glances,—and the most trivial betrayals of ill-suppressed laughter.

Some considerable time was naturally consumed in this business, and at length each reported that she had finished the task undertaken. Then succeeded a proposition that the two notes should be read aloud, before sealing; and then came the reading itself.

Ellen's was no more than an indefinite and exceedingly general sentiment, nowise particular in its application, and apposite only to the occasion in hand. It was brief,—pointed enough,—and transcribed in a fair, girlish, legible hand.

Bella, on the contrary, had poured out upon her white sheet what glowed with the brightness and warmth of a flame of fire. Though entirely impromptu with her, it was crowded with intense meaning, and gleamed all over with the sparkles of a true and earnest feeling. To a stranger,—and particularly to a young and susceptible stranger,—such words would come as the expressions of a deliberately formed partiality. A warm spirit would at once take fire with them; especially, as

they came from a source so completely enveloped in mystery, themselves closely woven in, too, with the golden threads of such romantic associations.

Bella laughed heartily on completing the reading of her production, esteeming it all a good joke,—in fact, the very best joke she had ever yet played off on any one. She had, however, gone much beyond jocular limits, in that she had so fervently addressed the Italian student as an *ideal* character,—rather than a flesh-and-blood personage. But the result would in good time develop itself. She averred she cared for nothing now so much as *the joke*.

The two notes, therefore, were forthwith sealed up, and intrusted to the hands of Ellen, who expected her father's sleigh for her every moment at the door. She designed leaving them at the post-office on her way home.

Before night, they were on their way to their destination.

— A week rolled round. It was a week crowded with the usual winter joys to the inseparable friends, not a few of whose hours were passed in gravely and gayly speculating upon the *denouement* of their bold proceedings. Each had made a venture, far more daring than she had ever attempted before.

Bella happened to meet Ellen in the post-office, on the last afternoon of the week. They mutually

smiled on recognizing—as each thought she did—the hidden and impalpable feelings each of the other.

“Is there a letter for Miss So-and-so?” inquired Bella, of the official,—who just at that moment, too, was frowning a frown of official dignity,—giving him the fictitious name she had appended to her Valentine.

The postmaster favored her countenance with a searching glance, and, without reaching forth a hand, replied that there was.

“And is there one for ‘Olivia’?” asked Ellen, scarcely successful in repressing the smile that insisted on playing about her mouth.

“Yes,” glumly answered the general government’s deputy.

“We should like them, then,” said Bella, her eyes brightening perceptibly.

Forthwith the man of the pigeon-holes seemed to come to himself again; for he instantly went about fumbling over his pile of miscellaneous letters, although he well enough knew that the objects sought were not among them. This, however, was an artful pretext to afford him time to study the features of the two roguish beauties from over his iron-bowed spectacles; which delay he improved to the full of his advantage.

The girls at last received their missives, and left

the office in the highest glee. Breaking the seals in haste, they silently read the contents as they walked on. Both were too deeply interested to utter a loud syllable.

Their surprise was unbounded, to find that their epistles were signed by the real names of the young men whom they had addressed. There certainly was no disguise there. As it chanced, moreover, to turn out, each writer requested the great pleasure of a continuance of the correspondence.

Bella read her note to Ellen first, when they had finally reached the house of the latter, and Ellen in turn gave up the contents of hers to Bella.

At first blush, it seemed to them as if the two students might have acted conjointly, and with some double purpose, in thus requesting a continuance of the correspondence. Yet there was nothing, after all, but pure suspicion on which to hang such a conclusion. It was possible that the young men did not so much as know each other. Then how any collusion?

They debated the matter thoroughly, and in perfect confidence, between themselves. Ellen's cool judgment never contrasted so strikingly with Bella's wayward impulses as at this time.

"What are we to do *now*, Nell?" asked Bella. "To tell you the plain truth, I am not a little perplexed."

"*My* mind is made up," replied Ellen.

"To what?" inquired Bell, anxiously.

"Why, I think the matter has gone far enough,—just as far as it should," said she.

"And you are satisfied to drop it where it is?" said Bella, a rich carmine beautifully suffusing her neck, cheeks, and forehead.

"Certainly; to drop it just where it is, Bell," replied she, with firm determination.

"You are *afraid!*" exclaimed Bella, essaying playful intimidation.

"I mean to be *prudent*, Bell," was Nell's reply.

"For my part, Nell, I confess I am unaccountably interested. That is all,—my curiosity has become awakened, and I should just like to pry farther into this mystery."

"No, no, Bell; a *joke* is a *joke*; but there may be such a thing as carrying it *too far!*"

"I admit it. Yet I have no fears in *my case*, dear Nell!"

"But what do you propose, then?" asked Ellen.

"To continue the correspondence," replied Bella.

"Why, just see how fervently the Italian youth pleads for it! I declare, I hav'nt it in my heart to deny him so trifling a favor!"

"Then I won't attempt to advise, Bella; but I am going to act as beseems me. I think I shall let the matter stop where it is. We have had a

good frolic over it already, and that is all we set out for."

"And I think, Nell, that I shall write just one letter more, to have the pleasure of being convinced that there is *some* reality to so illusive a dream. Only *one*, however."

"I hope no disappointment, then, may overtake you, dear Bella," replied her friend; and not long after, the two girls separated for the night.

—— If there was one single thing that Isabella Bellingham could do very much better than any other, it was writing a letter. In this respect, she was herself pretty well aware of her superiority.

To any one, it is an art that must prove itself a very valuable, as it certainly is a most comfortable acquisition. Nor must it necessarily be imagined a possession that can mysteriously be acquired simply with the wish. It costs quite as much labor of preparation,—is earned only on condition of as much preliminary pains-taking,—and is perfected only after quite as much practice, as any one of the arts that are welcomed to a far higher rank in the public estimation.

Bella had the name, too, in this respect, of being just what she was. She wrote dashing, brilliant, and oftentimes even eloquent letters. There was no mark of stiffness in them, either; nor any trace of that formality that chokes ease, grace, and pleasur-

ableness,—all of them at once,—to death. She seemed to hold a pen with a diamond-point; yet with all the graphic lines that pen could at most times be made to draw, there was no lack of lustre or genial warmth.

The first, and chief charm about her letters, was their simplicity. There was no betrayal of an effort after effect. There was no apparent studiousness of language; no trickery of mere words; no adornment only of phrases;—with which so many confound true beauty of expression, and true depth of feeling. And happily married with this vein of simplicity that ran through her letters, was an earnest directness, which is the only channel upon which sincerity, and of course hearty pleasure, can be borne.

— She reached her room again, and threw herself within the embracing arms of a huge easy-chair that stood before the glowing fire, awaiting, apparently, her return. Throwing off her hood, and dismantling her shoulders of the warm garment she wore about them, she laid her head back—far back into the yielding depths of the cushioned chair, and gave herself up to the exciting and engrossing dream of the moment.

What thoughts drove themselves, like bolts, through her brain,—what charming fancies wove themselves into a beautiful broidery for those

thoughts,—what unreal hopes flashed and glittered, like brilliant fragments of diamonds, before her bedazzled vision,—it is out of all possibility to tell. No imagination, even, could successfully follow on in the path so impulsive, so rich, and so warm a nature as hers would necessarily strike out; much less could a pen trace upon paper even the faintest outlines of that path which such an imagination might succeed in detecting.

— She awoke at length from the depth of her dream. Or rather, from the quiet into which she had been apparently plunged, she was ushered at once into an atmosphere of high excitement. There was a burning flush upon her cheek, and her dark eyes swam with the flood of sudden enthusiasm that had overtaken her. With all this betrayal of feeling, too, a secret pride had been awakened in her breast, which would wreak itself on the burning thoughts that were about to bestrew the fair sheet before her. It was a pride that in her breast ever asserted itself,—to impress strangers, and now this stranger in particular, with the brilliant and dashing qualities of her character.

She seated herself before the table already drawn out in close contiguity with the fire, and placed paper and ink in front of her. Then taking up her pen, she began a letter to her distant and unknown Valentine.

Her pen glided swiftly over line after line of the fair page, yet never keeping pace with the tumultuously stirred current of her feelings and thoughts. The first page of her sheet was covered,—the second,—the third. She stopped not, however, there. Her heart was wofully mixed up with her work, and her judgment followed but blindly on. She turned over to her fourth and last page!

There was such a mystical blending of the real and the unreal to her in this business, she could hardly answer herself whether she was addressing a living being, with active and far-reaching sympathies, or only some etherealized idea,—some unclothed fragment of a fancy,—some painted emblem of an illusive dream.

She wrote to the Italian stranger of the land of his nativity; of its sunny hill-slopes, purpling with the clustering grapes; of its orators and poets; of its dreamy and delicious scenery, changeful ever in its never-ending beauty; of its grand and glorious history; of its vine-wreathed temples,—and fountains,—and columns,—and grottoes; of its breathless, yet breathing sculpture; its music, and its song.

In language whose hidden depths none could explore so well as the Italian youth, she depicted the fresh disasters that crowded, like the clouds of oncoming doom, around his country's horizon; and

evoked from her warm heart the most earnest prayers for its final restoration to a condition better worthy its early history.

All this she meant merely as impersonal. It was, in real truth, farthest from her deliberate purpose to do more than express a not uncommon sympathy for any child of a fair, but down-trodden land. But her enthusiasm had led her much beyond the limit she at first defined for herself. As I said,—her impulses led, and her judgment followed.

This letter was duly dispatched to the young man by the mail of the following day. And but few days elapsed thereafter, ere a reply came back. The blood of the young and ardent Italian had fired at once with her burning words. His nature kindled to an enthusiasm far transcending her own. Language that she had deemed only common-place and complimentary, seemed to him to have flamed with an intensity of meaning.

In consequence, his letter in reply was full of the most ardent expressions and the warmest protestations. He felt flattered that he had found so gifted an American lady, who entered with such zest into his own feelings, and who betrayed such a contagious and irrepressible sympathy for his native land.

From generalities, it was but too easy for him to descend to the contemplation of individual tastes

and sympathies. With a peculiar felicity and delicacy of expression, he merged at once all his impersonal sympathy for his native land into an individual, personal sympathy for Miss Bella Bellingham; and she became interested in his words beyond her power to explain. So sensitive and impressible a mind as hers, was the last to be heedless of such appeals.

When Bella received this epistle from the stranger-student, and after she had read it all carefully, though excitedly through, she again sought the friendly embraces of her huge easy-chair, and passed long hours alone in most delightful reflections connected with the subject. The matter had already gone but a little way, and as yet no friendship that promised to be lasting, had been formed, and no olden sympathies torn up. While it remained thus, all seemed like a pleasant dream. As yet, there were no forebodings in the sky,—no premonitions from lengthening shadows across the landscape of the future. Her heart was still free to revel in its wonted round of impulses and sympathies, and could be brought back by no golden chain held in another's hand, to a circle of diminished limits. She resolved to continue so pleasant a correspondence for a time longer.

— A letter followed not long after from her pen; and this again was speedily succeeded by an-

other from the young student. For some time the communication was thus kept up, Bella all the while strictly maintaining the *incognito* she had at first assumed.

At length she received one, beseeching her in a very earnest manner to allow an interview. From almost any other stranger such a proposition would have struck her with surprise; but her heart had so unconsciously become interested in the stranger, and her gushing sympathies had gathered themselves so closely about his very name, that she betrayed no alarm whatever, even to her own self. The proposition was, however, for the time declined. Bella pleaded varied inability to comply with it, yet vaguely and encouragingly hinted at the pleasure and possibility of a meeting at some future day.

The young student was not a little annoyed by this reply; for, while it had no such effect as to dampen the ardor of his hopes, it nevertheless cruelly deferred the fruition of his desires. He wrote again to Bella. This time he besought her, if she would not gratify him with a personal interview, at least to give him some adequate description of her personal appearance.

The unwonted and increasing fervor of the young man could not, at this point, escape the recognition of Bella. Already she felt warned against proceed-

ing too hastily, and going too far. In addition to this, that roguish, fun-loving element in her character now partially asserted itself to her; and between these two wide extremes of fear and fun, she soon afterwards sat down to give her stranger-friend an idea of her personal peculiarities.

The description, as may well be imagined under the circumstances, was a ludicrous combination of the true and the fanciful. She would frankly commence an outline of her features in all sincerity, and straightway branch off upon the most ridiculous and absurd unrealities. Could her countenance have been drawn as she actually depicted it, her friends would have laughed it down as the oddest of all the oddities conceivable. She gave herself squinting eyes; and hinted ominously at her ignorance whether her tresses had yet relinquished auburn and adopted red. And so through the entire picture. But the brilliant and sterling qualities of her mind,—it was beyond the power of her roguery to misrepresent *them*. Of these he had already had an earnest, in the warm and eloquent effusions of her pen.

The whole letter—at which she laughed unconscionably, on reading it over—was crowned with a request, made half-playfully, that he should favor her with an account of *himself*, and of *his* personal appearance, in turn.

The letter was sent. Bella thought the whole matter over again.—“Perhaps,” said she to herself, “I have gone too far now; but I hav’nt yet committed myself, and he certainly knows nothing yet of my personal appearance, or even my name. Yet it may be quite as well to have the matter at once cut short *here*. I will go no farther.”

This was the advice her judgment gave her. Then there stole over her again those fragrant breaths of romance, and of indescribable—because mysterious sensations, that intoxicated her soul anew, and enticed her still farther on toward the pleasure that should have been prohibited. And thus was she sorely puzzled between the demands of duty and the allurements of her inclination.

At this very inopportune time, and before she had yet expected to receive a reply from the young student, her father chanced one day to drop in at the village post-office while the mail was being opened. When he was once alone with the worthy official, the latter took the liberty to acquaint him with the fact, that his daughter Bella was conducting a correspondence, under a fictitious name, with a gentleman in College. As a true friend of his, he assured him he had felt it to be his *duty* to say this much.

—— The honest clergyman was thunderstruck. He had not heard a whisper of all this before.

It was most astounding and unwelcome intelligence to him.

"There is here at this time," quoth the obliging postmaster, "something from that quarter for Bella."

"Impossible!" stamped and exclaimed Mr. Bellingham. "Pray, let me have it at once!"

—Forthwith the devoted man of letters drew forth from a hidden pigeon-hole a letter and a small package, both tightly sealed. They were, as usual, addressed to the name which Bella had assumed to the student.

Fired almost to frenzy, the doting, yet proud father hurried home to his study. He excitedly broke the seal of the letter, and read.

It was an epistle,—unfortunate as it may seem!—full of the warmest expressions of admiration and attachment. The young man had poured out his heart upon the page. All he had,—all he was,—all he ever hoped to be,—he offered, freely and fully, to the possession of the lady. He confessed the whole burden that lay at his heart, and fervently besought her not to reject his suit.

—The deeply excited father, having perused all this with such equanimity as he then could best command, proceeded to break the seal of the package. It contained the daguerreotype of a young man of decidedly fine looks, with a face of a highly

intellectual cast, and a complexion that denoted foreign birth.

The clergyman could scarcely contain his feelings. A man, however, of his wonted promptness and resolution, was at no loss how to proceed. He instantly sat down to his table, and began a letter of the severest rebuke and most burning indignation to the young gentleman. He assured him, that he would receive both his last letter and his miniature by the same mail that bore him this merited castigation.

Mr. Bellingham, in his mind, as yet declined acquainting his daughter with his discovery of her secret; sagaciously concluding that if he could himself effectually rebuff the stranger, the purpose desired would be attained equally well. By receiving no more communications from her admirer, Bella would very naturally conclude that he had unaccountably forsaken and forgotten her.

This might all have well happened, exactly as her father had designed. But Bella herself chanced to drop in at the post-office not an hour after her father had been there, and to her chagrin learned that he had carried away what had just reached her fictitious address!—Of course the postmaster had nothing to reveal of the very industrious part *he* took in the matter. Of course not.

The poor girl, hitherto feeling absolutely secure in

the intrenchments of her pseudonym, rushed frantically home again. Unobserved by any of the family, she entered her room, and, sitting down in her chair, began to wonder what it was best to do.—Her father even then was engaged in excoriating the fine sensibilities of the distant lover.

Just at that moment, as the strangest of fortune would have it, her father was summoned below by the sudden arrival of visitors. She heard his footstep on the stairs, with inexpressible delight; and when the slam of the parlor door fell on her ears, she flew into his study. She was determined to know what the character of these two missives was, and to read and see them with her own eyes.

Entering the quiet study of her father, she was startled to find the objects of her anxious search on the table directly before her! There was the letter from her passionate lover,—there his own “counterfeit presentment”!

Hastily snatching up the latter first, she gazed upon it with enraptured eyes, and a wildly beating heart, and pressed it with impulsive tenderness to her lips. She read through the student's letter with rapidity and excitement. It was only what she had expected from him.

Then she seized the other letter,—that of her father. It was not yet finished; yet from what

had been written, she was able to gather the terrible whole of his stern purpose.

Her mind was quite as resolute, however, as *his*. Again entering her own room, she sat down and hastily penned a letter to her lover, acquainting him with the sad misfortune that had overtaken her, and detailing the fixed design of her inflexible parent. She assured him, too, that she had seen his miniature, and drank in the full delight his welcome letter yielded her. In addition to this, she expressed a strong desire to have an interview with him at the earliest moment possible.

Hurrying stealthily from the house, she proceeded instantly to her bosom friend, Ellen, and acquainted her with all that had happened. A brother of Ellen volunteered his services, under an injunction of strict secrecy, as bearer of this letter of Bella to the post-office in the neighboring town, to which point the young student had been likewise directed to address his reply. By this activity on Bella's part, her letter gained a whole day on the fulminations of her father.

As yet, Mr. Bellingham was ignorant that his daughter so much as suspected his knowledge of her secret. Accordingly, he determined to act without betraying to her any special motive. He encouraged her to pack off and make a visit with some of his and her friends in a city not far away.

She was inwardly loth to go; yet she felt that it would be her worst policy to venture excuse, or attempt delay. And as soon thereafter as seemed to him sufficient time to satisfy Bella that she would hear no more from her lover, she was sent away to her friends.

—— The father himself was the dupe! Bella carried away with her a fresh letter from her lover in her pocket! It came through the post-office of the neighboring town! ——

She had been absent from home but a little time, before every arrangement was completed to bring about at last an interview with the young student. He would arrive on a stated day.

—— The day came. The lover came. He came, as he hoped, to greet his future bride. He reached the house that had been designated, and inquired of the servant for her.—On some pretext, she had been sent for by her father, to return home that very day. His fond hopes he might now feed on the dry ashes of disappointment.

Bella reached home, but only to receive positive instructions from her father to make another journey to a still more distant city, and there pass the remainder of the winter with friends. Possibly he had had no suspicions of her conduct since leaving home the first time,—yet there was a vague and indistinct fear brooding in his brain. It haunted

him by night and by day. She was accordingly a second time dispatched to friends at a distance, and in perfect safety arrived among them.

— A fortnight had elapsed, and the Italian youth was at her feet!

For the first time now they met. He was fired with her beauty, as his soul had been with her sympathies. Again he offered her his hand; and this time he felt the burden lifted from his heart.

— He was a foreigner, as it appeared, of distinguished birth; was possessed of great wealth; had a soul of the finest and purest sensibilities; an intellect that admirably illustrated all; and a person that would not have failed to recommend itself to a woman predisposed to love.

The proud and unyielding father was at length apprised of all, over the united signatures of his daughter and the stranger. Again plunged into a vortex of terrible excitement, he hastened at once to the place whither Bella had been sent, and there confronted the lovers together! They, however, were calm, self-possessed, and determined.

But the interview was productive of vastly more good than could have been foreseen. By some magical influence, the father was brought over to give his unreserved consent to their desired union. Perhaps the sagacious reader may know, without being told, what that influence was.

— The young man received his diploma, that summer ; and not a great while afterwards, in the house of her own father, the beautiful Isabella Bellingham was united in marriage to the choice of her romance and her heart.

The interesting ceremony was performed in the same little parlor where Bella and Ellen had concocted their Valentine scheme, only the winter before. Ellen, too, was Bella's bridesmaid, just as she had ever been her dearest and truest friend. The happy pair immediately set sail for Italy, their favoring gales laden with the prayers and blessings of the yet deeply-loving father.

— From over his iron-bowed spectacles, the inquisitive glance of the postmaster still peers ; but he has grown unaccountably more grum, and is said by the good village people to find quite all he wants to do,—in simply minding his own business.

A COUSIN FROM TOWN.

“COME, Kate,” said Lizzie Deming to her sister, as she ran to meet her in the garden, one fine morning in Spring,—“come, Kate, we’ve got to bestir ourselves now.”

“Why so, Lizzie?” asked Kate, turning round upon her sister, and scanning her features closely.

“What is to happen, pray?”

“You don’t know, then?”

“Not I, indeed.”

“Then listen, and let me tell you. Father has just told mother that Cousin Sarah will certainly be here in a week, to make a visit; and a week soon slips away, you know.”

“Lizzie,” replied her sister, after a moment’s thoughtfulness,—“I’m sorry.”

“*Sorry!*”

“Yes; I’m sorry, indeed, that she’s coming,” reiterated Kate.

“Why so, pray? You can’t be sorry to see your own cousin, can you?”

"But she don't *seem* like a cousin to me," said Kate. "And she's city-bred, too, and takes such airs to herself! Why, she will be turning up her nose at us all, before she has been here an hour. You don't know yet how very particular these town-people are. And it's so very long since I've seen her, too,—I declare that I'd rather not see her at all."

"I know that town-people are very apt to be as you say; but perhaps, after all, it may not happen to be so with Cousin Sarah," pleaded Lizzie, in her behalf.

"You don't *know* that she's different from the generality of city people, do you, Lizzie?"

"No; only I can't help thinking she is more like ourselves," answered Lizzie. "But, at all events, we must get ready for her. There's enough to be done, I'm sure."

"She will have to sleep alone in the large front chamber," said Kate; "and the furniture must all be arranged anew, and the looking-glasses decorated, and—oh, how I wish we had some of the rich furniture I have seen at the upholsterer's in town! I believe I could make her think, when she woke in the morning, that she was in her own father's house again. But *we* have such old-fashioned furniture, Lizzie!"

"Well," said the latter, "then with what we

have we must do the best we can. That is the only way left us."

— The country-house of Mr. Deming was as pretty a rural retreat as could anywhere be found. It was built, to be sure, in days before honest country folk began to dream that economy and good taste could have anything to do with each other,—so that the dwelling itself offered no topic for architectural connoisseurs to expatiate very extensively upon. But the grounds about the house were of all others the loveliest. I hardly think myself adequate to their description.

The natural woodbines, and clumps of bushes, and wild creepers, had been faithfully preserved in the yard, and delicate and tasteful hands had trained them with affectionate care. Rose-trees stood in almost every angle. Trumpet-creepers clambered with the load of their flowering wealth from pillar to rafter, and fringed the casements of the windows with long trails and ruffles of deep green.

In the beds were hyacinths, and anemones, and columbines, and a score of other such plants of the garden; and clover-bells, and fox-glove, and cglantine run riot among the dark grass that was stretched like a carpet from walk to walk. A few dwarf firs stood sentry, at respectful distances from each other,—in the dreary winter always promising

returning spring, and in the dewy summer always deepening the surrounding green.

There was no art in this, either; it was all nature. And that was the reason why the spot was so charming. Its chief beauty was its simplicity. Serpentine walks would have failed entirely of the effect of these little natural avenues, that twisted, and turned, and bent, wherever a tree or a bush stood in their way. Borders of well-trimmed box could never have produced one-half so pleasing an illusion to the eye, as did the thick turf that seemed to have been purposely rolled up on either side of the walks. And all through the long Summer days,—those golden hours of dreams and reveries,—the bees kept up their industrious humming in the flowers, and the birds their melodies in the tree-tops. Butterflies, in gayest kirtles, fluttered over the green grass, as if they were dancing flowers, keeping time with the melody of the birds,—and the waters,—and the growing vegetation. And what the wonder, then, that this place seemed an Elysium to the red-cheeked girls who haunted its quiet nooks? What life in town that could stand a moment in comparison with this full, free, joyous life, in such a sequestered corner in the country?

— It was, indeed, a busy week with the rustic beauties, for they were especially ambitious in their preparations. They were bent on satisfying their

more refined cousin that they were not altogether clowns, and boors, and beggars, in the country. They left no stone unturned. Scrubbing brushes grew into intimate acquaintance with windows, walls, and floors; scouring could have made no more impression upon them.

Carpets came up in haste, and were spread again. Brasses were polished all over the house, till one could as well employ them for mirrors as the looking-glasses that were tilted over from the walls. The little parlor was put in perfect trim, and the parlor-chamber, as they themselves averred, looked in apple-pie order. The entire house was obliged to submit to a hasty, but thorough renovation. There was no other way. And then the beds in the yard were carefully weeded, till not a spear of useless vegetation thrust its point above the mellow mould. And the grass was carefully raked out, and the old dried leaves stirred from their hiding places, where they had fruitlessly counted on a snug summer's nap. And the walks were swept clean, till they looked almost as hard and smooth as the oaken floor.

On the evening before the expected arrival, Kate and Lizzie sat down together in the wainscotted parlor, as if to catch a brief rest, and to take a review of the labor they had successfully performed. They had filled the vases on the low mantel

with beautiful flowers, freshly plucked from the garden, and the open fire-place was decorated with boughs of evergreen, and branches of smoke-tree and asparagus. Only two pictures hung against the walls, and they were paintings of their dear parents. They hardly dared think the execution rude, or unfinished, so devotedly loved they the originals.

Their elder brother Paul,—a noble, free-hearted young man, with a strong dash of the romantic in his nature,—was in the room too; and all three began talking freely upon the great event of the morrow,—the arrival of their cousin Sarah. She would probably arrive in the stage by nine o'clock.

"I hope she will find *something* to please her," remarked Kate, fatigued with the very recollection of her long week's labor.

"Why, Kate," asked Paul; "do you imagine she is at all hard to suit?"

"No more than city people generally are," replied Kate.

"I imagine she must be awful particular," rejoined Paul.

"And I *know* that she is," chimed in Lizzie; "yet for all that, I hope to assist her about enjoying herself."

"Why," said Kate, "what sort of creatures do you suppose she imagines we are? Satyrs? or

griffins? or *bears*? Do you think she has any idea that country people can be altogether civilized?"

Lizzie laughed outright, and said she was sure she didn't know.

Paul, however, responded in a more jovial way; and said he rigidly believed that she *did* think they were considerably below human; which remark Kate gladly caught up, and half-seriously preached therefrom for quite fifteen minutes.

"I hope, at least," added she, "that she will not laugh in our very *faces*, as she discovers our failings!"

— Morning came at last; the momentous morning of cousin Sarah's arrival. The air was pure and bracing. The sun was bright, and never so golden. The trees, and the flowers, and the air, were full of gushing melody. The little parlor windows had been opened early, and the blinds thrown back, that the odors from the clustering flowers might float deliciously into the apartment. The parlor chamber was bedecked freshly with leaves, and sprays, and buds, and blossoms, as for some gay festival. And the pillows, and the counterpane upon the little bed, were as white as the driven snow, and not a wrinkle upon either. How could even the most fastidious lady from town fail to be enchanted with such preparations for her?

The stage was heard, at length, on the road below, among the woods that skirted it on either side; and the girls hurried timidly to the door, their young hearts all in an uproar. They pressed their hands upon their sides for relief.

Mr. Deming walked down to the gate, to be at hand when the stage rolled up; and Paul followed at a respectful distance after, to be ready to assist about getting off the baggage. And the girls still stood peeping timidly through the thick-leaved vine that screened the door.

The coach stopped just before the gate. For quite a moment, the sisters neither saw nor heard anything from their place of concealment. They began to half imagine and half hope, that their cousin had really not come at all.

But on that point they were suddenly undeceived; for they unexpectedly caught the loud and ringing tones of a female voice, so rich and so musical, that it seemed to them more like the snatch of a song than anything else,—and then distinguished the welcome words:—

“Uncle Deming, how *do* you do?”

—— They were thrown off their guard entirely; and impulsively pushed their heads through the place of their concealment, only to behold their supposed cousin thrusting her gloved hand out of the coach window, and shaking that of her uncle

most heartily. And then she did the same thing with their brother Paul, who, it might in this place be admitted, took a huge liking to her free-and-easy manner.

The door was opened and she alighted. Her uncle then took another shaking, this time from both her little hands; and Paul stood ready for a repetition of the same process. Mr. Deming congratulated her on so safe and pleasant a ride, and in his simple and hearty way welcomed her to their country home. And while they stood there together, waiting to see the driver take off the baggage she had brought, she asked not less than half a dozen times after her aunt and the girls. The latter heard it all, and exchanged silent glances in the door.

"We must certainly go out to meet her," whispered Lizzie.

Her father was conducting her up the walk, and Lizzie stepped briskly across the piazza, without another word.

"This is Lizzie, Miss Sarah," said Mr. Deming, introducing her.

"My dear cousin Lizzie!" exclaimed Sarah, advancing hastily to her, and saluting her with a most affectionate kiss; "I am, indeed, very glad to see you again!"—and she continued holding her hand within her own, and gazing endearingly into

her eyes, as if she had just found a long-lost sister, instead of a country cousin whom she really knew but little personally of. "I hope you are very well, Lizzie," continued she; "and how is your dear sister Kate?—and your good mother? I hope I shall find you all well."

Lizzie stemmed the unbroken torrent of her inquiries and exclamations as best she could, leading her cousin along to the door. There she was met by both Kate and her mother; and there the interchange of free and joyous feelings suffered nothing from diminution. Sarah said that she was delighted beyond measure with the thought of reaching so lovely a spot; and her eyes seemed already—if one could have judged from her talk—to have scanned the minutest beauties of the grounds. Her spirits were towering. She laughed while she talked, and talked while she laughed. She felt so sure, she said, of enjoying herself in the country, that she knew she never could regret having come. And she began soberly to lament the long lapse of years during which she had never been out among her relatives. So gayly did she run on, her cousins scarcely knew what was to be made of her. And when she sat down by the little parlor window, it seemed as if language were very poorly able to convey the overflow of her delight.

She could think of no place with which to compare the place, but Heaven.

She spoke so lovingly of the flowers,—and the fresh grass,—and the green leaves,—and the music of the birds and bees. Her tongue run on without control about the snug, cosey, delightful parlor they were in; and she felt very sure they must be so happy there together, and no one to disturb them, either. What a charm had the gadding honeysuckles,—and the climbing creepers,—and the loaded rose-trees,—in her delighted eyes! How full of sweet odors was the breeze that floated gently in at the window! What a dreamy quietude in the humming of the bees; and what bewildering visions in the wanton butterflies!

Over and over again, she told them all her hopes,—all her preferences,—all her wishes; and her cousins must certainly have either thought her a perfect Madge Wildfire, or the most honest-hearted little beauty that had ever sat in the shadow of their favorite honeysuckles.

The day went off as summer days usually go off in the country;—no rattling of vehicles,—no tramping of feet,—no crowding of passengers, all the day long. It was a new life to her; calmer, sweeter, purer, than the life she had just cast off. Her spirits immediately confessed the change. Her

countenance visibly betrayed it. Her own heart told her that she had suddenly become another being.

She *would* follow the girls into the kitchen ; and no protests from her aunt could keep her out of the sweet-smelling dairy. She asked them all how many cows they kept, and how much butter and cheese they made. She played with the old house-dog, as he lay in the shade just without the back door ; and ran off by herself to examine the secrets of the poultry-yard. No delight could exceed hers, at the sight of the young chickens, and geese, and ducks, that had hardly broken the shell. She stood by the hour among them, dealing them dough, or plumping the little downy ducks into the huge trough that sufficed them for a pond. And when at last she had seen all, back she ran into the house again, full of her narrative of the many delightful wonders she had visited. Never was there such a place before. She declared she would willingly stay there all her days. And the girls would look vacantly into her arch face as she said it, as if they could not believe her really in earnest.

Before nightfall, she had gone over every part of the house, thrusting her head into every corner and angle from garret to cellar. And when evening came on, and they proposed retiring for the night, she astonished them still more than ever by

declaring she wanted to sleep in the little box of a bedroom that overlooked the porch! She said it was just such a charming little room as she always wanted for her own; and they had to assent to her preference, although the parlor-chamber had been prepared with so much care for her. The room to which she had taken such an unaccountable liking, had scarcely received their attention at all. The girls felt mortified at their strange situation.

Long after Kate and Lizzie Deming had gone to bed, they lay awake discussing the strange disappointment they had felt in their cousin's character. She had, in a moment as it were, broken down all the barriers of their prejudices, and even seemed to feel much more at home there than they did themselves. She was a half-riddle to them.

—— "I supposed she was so *particular*," said Kate.

"I know you did, sister," replied Lizzie; "and I am glad enough we are so very agreeably disappointed. What a sweet girl she is, to be sure!"

"But I wonder at her choice of that little band-box to sleep in."

"I've heard that fine ladies are apt to be romantic at times," rejoined Lizzie.

"Yes," said Kate, "and so have I; but where's the romance in *that*? If she was romantic, she wouldn't be so crazy over all the little trifles about

this place. Romantic ladies, I've read in tales, are always running away with foreign counts, and earls, and lords. They don't take up with such simple pleasures as *our* place affords. I'll tell you what I think about it, Lizzie."

"Well, I should be glad to know."

"She's an *odd* little creature, then. That's all I can possibly make out of it."

And with so very sagacious a conclusion in their heads, they fell fast asleep.

— Next morning, they were up early, bustling here and there about the house at their usual avocations. Kate, who had not yet gone down stairs, ventured to tap lightly at her cousin's door, hoping she might then be awake. But her knock receiving no answer, she opened it cautiously and looked in.

Her cousin had gone! Kate stood a moment stupefied. Sarah had actually risen before her. She looked once more through the little room, loth to believe her eyes; but the gay and joyous bird had flown. Kate, in her astonishment, thought she might have been just as likely to fly out through the open window, as through the door.

She ran down stairs, half ashamed of the thought of being beaten at early rising—a feat supposed to be best performed in the country—by her cousin. She looked for her in the dining-room,—in the

kitchen,—in the parlor,—on the piazza,—in the garden ; but she was nowhere to be found. She had given all of them the slip. Even Mrs. Deming had not herself seen her, and attempted to excuse her early hours by insinuating a *flightiness* in her natural disposition.

But Kate was determined to protract her search, and bring the truant back again. So she strolled through the garden ; and over the yard ; and looked into every dingle where she thought she might, in her frolicsome spirit, have hidden ; and twice or thrice called her loudly by name. But no cousin made her appearance anywhere.

She resolved to go to the poultry-yard ; but Sarah was not there. To the piggery ; but no Sarah there, either. Nor at the dovecote. Nor about the barn. And at last she essayed the barn-yard itself. The patient cows stood there, the dew drizzling on their sleek coats, and looked up at her with their mild eyes as she approached ; but there was no cousin among them. For all that, however, she might have been there ; and the likelihood was that she had. And just at that moment, too, Lizzie came running up, all out of breath, her cheeks glowing like the eastern sky.

“Have you found her ?” impatiently asked Kate.

“Why, no ; I came to see if *you* had !”

— The two sisters struck off down the lane,

and came to one of the cattle-paths that threaded the way to the distant pastures. They went on, one behind the other, for a few rods, and Lizzie suddenly broke the silence :

"Kate, look there ! As sure as I live, there she is, coming up from the pasture, with Paul !"

Kate did look, and was speechless with astonishment. Sarah was slowly walking along up with their brother.

The moment she espied her cousins, she set out on a flying run towards them, and reached them before they could fairly recover from their surprise. A pair of boots encased her feet and ankles, affording them abundant protection from the dew that hung upon the grass ; and with one of her hands, white as the bud of a hawthorn, she held the gathered skirts of her morning robe. A healthy glow suffused her face, and her expressive eyes swam with delight. A fairer picture of a living nymph could not anywhere have been found.

"Good morning, girls !" exclaimed she, much before she reached them. "Oh, you don't know what a lovely walk I've had with Cousin Paul !—He has shown me the cattle, and the sheep ; and I have fed the poultry with him ; and set the little ducks to swimming in the trough ; and counted the dear little pigs ;—and—would you believe it !—I've *tried* to help him milk the cows ! Oh, we

have had *such* a grand time!—and you were not up, either! That was capital, wasn't it? *I* beat my cousins at early rising!—But I declare, I shall never forget *this* morning. The pastures look so beautifully; and the grass is full of diamonds; and great spider-webs are strung along from one tall grass-spire to another, like little woven blankets of gossamer, to catch the dew over night; and the lambs have had such a frolic with us over the fence; and every thing about here is *so* beautiful! Oh, I could indeed be happy to be here all the time!”

Kate smiled, and said she was sure that she wished she *could* stay with them; and Lizzie repeated the wish in a not very different form. Paul took a secret delight in every syllable he heard.

— They had a gay breakfast-hour over their fresh eggs, and golden-hued butter, and snow-white bread, and luscious, clotted cream; and many were the starts and surprises their gleeful city cousin gave them, as she told them seriously what most delighted her, and how she thought she should be most happy.

The rout of their prejudices was complete. Before she had been there many days, Sarah made them all love her like a sister. And the whole of her visit, which lasted quite a month, was but a constant round of delight to them,—ever fresh and ever new.

— They were sorrowing sadly in the little parlor, on the evening of her departure; and almost wished, in the selfishness of their grief, that she had not come at all. They would not then have felt her loss.

Paul happened to enter the room, exactly at the height of their sorrow, and sat down seriously to condole with his desolate sisters. He had himself taken many a pleasant stroll alone with his fair cousin, and regretted her departure, he said, quite as much as they. And with the design of composing the turbulence of their grief, he bent over and whispered to them in a low and confidential tone,—“Girls, don’t sorrow *too* much for her loss. *You are going to have your dear cousin for a sister!*”

THE OLD WOMAN OF THE COURT.

A CARRIAGE was never known to enter there.

It was a dilapidated Court ; with old, crazy, leaning houses on either side. There could be no snugger shelter from the world conceived. And yet it was a world by itself ; boasting its own indigenous population, its peculiar social rules, its excessively grotesque points and standards of morals, and its well-observed customs and formulas.

The strange houses, to one looking up from the ground, seemed nodding at each other, in a sort of fantastic recognition ; as if the one would say that it embosomed quite as much happiness as its neighbor over the way ; and as if the other would reply, that there was less room for discussing that subject numerically, than abstractly. And so they seemed to keep nodding, while the little windows of their rude and lofty gables winked and blinked busily, as the morning or evening sun fell upon their decimated panes.

There was but little intercourse that could strictly be called intimate, carried on between the different occupants of the Court; and it could not, perhaps, have well been otherwise. They had too hard a fight to wage with the world, to give up even a narrow margin of their time to pleasure among themselves. All the pleasure they knew, they caught by furtive glimpses, at points far apart. They had a close community of interest, in that they were all enlisted in the same ranks; but no further. Nay, there could not be sturdier haters than they, when one had fallen on a trifling lump of fortune that all the rest declared belonged to them as well.

Youth was chained in the same gang with Age. There were cheeks in that Court, with the sun still warm and mellow in them; and cheeks, too, through which dissipation and care had plowed many a broad and deep furrow. Even the younger part of the population seemed quite old. Little difference of years showed itself between them and their elders. Girls that might have made sylphs, and crones that bent their backs, and chattered their jaws, and scoured the streets for garbage,—both wore the stamp of the same seal. Poverty,—bitter Poverty was their landlord. He held all their scanty apparel in mortgage. He pinched their bodies; contracted their cheeks; threw the film over their eyes; and purpled their flesh, where

he had not already stained and worn it like old vellum.

It was a queer community,—that old town court. It had its “ragged regiment” of boys and girls, who tottled about insecurely from one door-step to another. It had its army of grown men and women, who crowded upon the narrow walks, yet strove hard to keep out of each other’s way. Humanity was packed and stowed away in the several stories of its edifices, like goods upon tiers of shelves. It swarmed at stated hours in the court, as mites riot in a Cheshire cheese. It hung its head out at the upper windows, as if the buildings, like heaped granaries, were full to bursting. It echoed its various attributes in all the musical notes of the legitimate diapason.

They gathered there at night from the town streets,—shriveled women, and sturdy men,—like currents of blood driving backward through the veins to the heart. On a summer night, the place was a small Bedlam, for its voices. Singing, crying, and wrangling,—all went on together. Smokes from vile pipes tainted the air, till the very lungs refused it for sustenance. Oaths thickened on the hearing, till pure English was lost in the jumble. And once in a long interval, peals of laughter took their part in the strange din; but there was no ring in them; no silver. They came

not from crowing lungs, healthy with life. They rolled not out from clear pipes. They were inhuman peals of laughter; besotted; hideous.

An old woman, whom nobody knew by name, lived in the court. Everybody knew her person, and nearly all had come to the place since she had herself. She was revered as the oldest inhabitant. She was the female Nestor of the locality. Yet she had no acquaintances, and seemed to have religiously resolved to admit none to her intimacy.

As she wended her way home at night, men and women stared at her from the ground windows and the doors, and the children turned about and walked after her. But, lawless little Huns that they were, they offered her no insults. They did not so much as tug at her scant dress. To treat her person with respect, was a part of the religion that had come down to them from their fathers and mothers. And silently and speechlessly this old woman threaded the narrow arm of the street, whether she went out to her mysterious occupations in the morning, or returned from them to her shelter late at evening. She was a riddle to them, riddles though they themselves were to others of honester callings. She was a Gnome in their superstitious eyes. A strange mist hung about her, through which they could not see to read her hidden char-

acter. And so they all, by common consent, forebore to apply to her the same measures and tests that were so rigidly employed by them upon every individual who dwelt there.

They agreed among themselves to call her Aunt Deborah; and by that name she went. Nephews and nieces of the same blood could not have paid their Aunt any more hearty reverence. The name she tacitly accepted, ratifying its application to her repeatedly by heeding it when called. So Aunt Deborah continued her quiet and unobtrusive ways among the very unquiet and braggart people that hived in this narrow little court. When she entered the outer door of the building in which she lived, none knew whither she went to secrete herself. That seemed to be the last of her, till she made her appearance in the court again, in the morning.

There was a rumor among the busy population that Aunt Deborah had not made her appearance for many days among them. It was a strange rumor, and calculated to excite general inquiry and alarm. Some said she had gone off into the streets at morning, and never returned. Some whispered that she had come to a violent death at her own hands. And some wondered whether she might not be sick. The latter class succeeded in pushing their inquiry to a practical boundary, and found,

true enough, that she was shut up closely in her room. Many went to offer their services, their humanity suddenly shining out through the cloud that wrapped itself about them.

But she saw only few at first, and afterwards refused to admit *any* to her presence. She seemed displeased that they had found her hiding-place. She felt like a mole, and dreaded to be disturbed in her secret burrowings. And at length all stopped going to her room, until they came to forget her altogether. This, however, required but a few days, for they fed their excitement on whatever topic came next. They were a people that had little dealings with the past. Their topics of talk changed with each tobacco-whiff from their mouths. Whatever *now* was, filled their minds. I am certain that their characteristics would furnish matter enough to make a pleasant and respectable volume.

She had alternately lain upon her coarse bed, and sat in her large chair, for several days. It was just the setting in of Winter, and a bitter beginning it was, too. The ground was frozen as hard as the pavements themselves. A storm was brewing in the sky, and when she walked to her narrow and low window, she could see it for herself. Only a square foot of sky was visible; but the clouds were scudding swiftly across. They were sullen

snow-clouds. She shuddered and shivered, and her teeth rattled together, as she looked up at them, and then walked back thoughtfully to her chair.

Ever and anon, she muttered something to herself, as she drew an old cloak closer about her. The syllables were incoherent and indistinct. They could be made only to mean something about some one who was missing. Perhaps she was expecting to see him again. Perhaps she was reproving herself,—scourging her woman's heart, because she had at some indefinite time committed a great wrong; and was now expiating it. She would even wring her hands; and large tears could be seen dimming her eyes.

— In another part of the town, a man of substance—both corporeally and pecuniarily—had just put on his coat to go home for the night. It might not have been a minute before or after the old tenant of the court stepped feebly to her window, and looked up into the square foot of leaden sky. Even if it were not, no one certainly could think it a very remarkable coincidence.

He had just settled himself in his warm garment, and was beginning to button it about his ample form. He turned his eye again upon his clerk, and a new thought struck him.

“Charles,” said he to the young man with a quill

behind his ear, "have you ever finished the collections in the court? You know there were some tenants there who were behindhand."

"No, sir," he answered. "I sent out the collector only yesterday, to see what I could do; but I didn't get much encouragement from the account he gave me."

"Well, what did he report?" asked his employer, now turning round fully upon him.

"Some he couldn't find at home: ——"

"No, *never* at home when the *rent* is due!" exclaimed the master of the rent-roll.

"Some said they could get nothing to *eat*,—much less, to pay for *rent*; ——"

"The scoundrels! how impudent they grow, every day I humor them! It shall be stopped! I'll have *my own* way now!"—and the very emphatic gesture that illustrated this speech, was a stormy stamp with his foot. He buttoned his coat higher and tighter,—quite to his throat.

"And there was one," continued the young man, "who complained of sickness."

"Sickness! More like, *drunkenness*! Who is he?"

"It was a woman"

"A woman, hey?" repeated the gentleman.

"What did he say of her besides?"

"Nothing, except that she said she was sick, and

could not get the money together till she was well enough to go about."

"I'll have no more of this," replied the gentleman, with much spirit. "I'll stop it where it is. I may as well lose one way as another. Tell Richard, when he comes in, to go to every one of these backward tenants this evening,—he'll be sure to find them home—and notify them all, that they'll go into the street to-morrow, unless their arrearages are all paid up by twelve o'clock."

"Yes sir, I will," responded the book-keeper.

"As for housing such vermin any longer, I won't," continued the landlord. "The well ones are able enough to pay, if they only feel it a necessity; and as for those that may be sick,—why, if their friends won't take care of them, let them go to the hospital."

Friends! Where can such outcasts expect to find friends!

— It was eight o'clock in the evening. The storm that had been gathering in the cloud-folds so long, came down at last. It was snow.

At first, it spit against the pane, and melted and run a little way down. Then it clinked, much like very fine hail. Then it came in thick gusts,—driving against the windows as if it were a spirit that *would not* be kept out in the wintry air.

Nothing but a bank of darkness without. The

noises in the court were hushed. Only a few unsteady, riotous echoes chased each other along the stairs, and alleys, and passages. Lights from wasting tallow-candles tried to penetrate the gloom, and reach to the opposite buildings; but they lost themselves before they had gone a foot, dissolving as in a thick mist. Farthing rushes were nothing in that wall of gloom. It seemed as if it might have fallen bodily from the sky into the court, blocking it up hopelessly.

The old woman, Aunt Deborah, was passing but a sorry time of it. Could her neighbors have looked in upon her, they would have found her still sitting in her chair, swathed in a cloak and an additional old quilt, and steadily bemoaning her fate. The darkness was not alone at her window-pane; it crowded about her heart.

She had evidently at last been reached by the fiend—Despair. It was plainly to be seen in her eyes; in the convulsive twitches of her frame; in the quick and restless working of her hands. Her brain was touched. Her heart had felt the heat of the overflowing lava.

Still her lips kept moving and murmuring. Still she kept up the meaningless movements of her body. And then she would turn her eyes wildly to the window, as if she could look into the gloom; and incline her head in the attitude of

listening, as if she could hear some dim and distant footsteps for whose coming she had long waited.

Footsteps did come. They were now on the stairs. They came nearer—nearer. They ascended to the landing. They stopped before her door.

Then she heard a knock. She answered it with a call to come in. The light had nearly gone out in the corner, and weird shadows danced against the low ceiling and the wall. Another driving gust beat upon the panes.

The door opened, and a man came in.

"It isn't he! No—no!" said the woman in a low tone.

He shut the door again, and then stood against it, peering about the room to discover if its inmate was there.

"Ah, here you are!" at last exclaimed he. "I thought I heard some one tell me to come in."

The woman seemed suddenly to have put on a look of sullenness.

"I've come once more for that rent!" said he, speaking with much absoluteness. "Can you pay it to me to-night?"

"I've been sick so long here in my room," she replied, "that I've done nothing more about it since you came before."

"That's always the excuse! Everybody's so sick, when you want to get any *money* out of 'em!"

The woman looked up at his countenance with a strange expression in her deep eyes, but said nothing.

He paid no attention to her glance, but continued:—

“If people will get sick, and keep sick, then they must find those that’ll take care of them. Sickness is no excuse for an honest debt, and you’ll find it won’t be in *this* case. You understand it, don’t you?”

“I should think there was little danger of misunderstanding *that* talk,” said she, her voice sinking so low that one might readily have believed it came out of her very heart.

“Well, then, this is what is to come of it. Unless your arrears are paid by to-morrow, ——”

“Oh, no!—no!—no! I *cannot* do it!” interrupted she.

—— “At twelve o’clock,” ——

“Impossible! You *cannot* expect it of me! So sick! So destitute! So dependent!”

—— “You will go into the street! That’s all!”

Again there drove a furious blast against the window. The snow, now more dense, rattled fearfully upon the glass. The woman held her breath involuntarily; while the man who had come on such an errand that night, looked anxiously toward the window, a chill of terror running rapidly over

him. He could see for himself what was the comfort of such a shelter, in such a storm as that.

The poor tenant fetched a deep groan.

"That is just what I was told to say to you, and all the rest of you that are behindhand," continued the man, feeling for the door-latch, and appearing most anxious to get back to more agreeable quarters. "I give you till to-morrow noon; no longer."

"I may as well go out to-night, then, as to-morrow," said she. "There can be but little difference."

"But won't you *try* to do something towards paying up this rent?" asked the collector.

"What can I do? I am helpless. I am sick. How long have I been shut up here, able to do nothing! No, turn me out *now*, if I must go at all! Let me lay my weary head in the street! Let the blast of the wind take my last breath! It may as well be so. I shall never live to see him again. Poor boy!—Poor boy! He must be dead! The thought,—how it burns on my brain!"

"Well," returned the man, "you may have the night to think of it. Your time will expire to-morrow noon. I had just such orders. So you had better be making an effort."

He opened the door upon this, and went out. A blast drove in, and blew out the flickering light.

The sick woman sat alone!

When once the light was gone out, feeble and faint as it was at the best, it seemed as if the storm beat the harder. The gloom through the window could not be penetrated. She went across the floor twice or thrice to look out, but could see nothing. The surging of the wind filled her ears. And the spiteful spitting of the snow against the panes, sometimes driven with redoubled fury, but at no moment intermitted, drove the blood back to her heart.

Her flesh was dry and cold. The fire was smouldering on the hearth. It was but too scanty at the best, and its warmth had nothing genial in it. It created no feeling of sociality over the apartment, and hardly one of comfort. It caused no pleasant images to dance upon the old wall, or the wainscoting, and it raised no pleasant thoughts in the brain.

"What a world is this!" murmured she, as she took her seat again, and began to stare into the dying embers. "What struggles!—as if the luckier were therefore the better one! How everybody jostles against his friend! What wrangling over objects that are not worth wrangling about! How much anxiety; how much fear; how continually is the strife kept up! Never so much as a pause. Never any rest."

A fresh breath of the increasing storm drove

with fearful violence against the window. The wind howled like a mad demon, intent on effecting an entrance. It shook the window-frame, as if it had seized hold of it with its airy hands, and would tear it into tatters. It piped shrilly at the crevices, and sent its dismal, death-like shrieks echoing through the apartment.

She shuddered again, and was silent.

Still came the storm ; never relaxing ; never folding up its black wings. The snow sifted and drifted down, like white plumage falling from millions of birds. It fell in heaps, all spotless and immaculate. It spread out in soft plains, pure as the light that first winged its way from heaven. It capped peaks, gables, and angles. It piled up smoothly and round upon window-sills, and lay in long, narrow lines upon fences.

There was the more mystery in its fall, because it came in the deep silence and the darkness. The blowing of the wind, whiffing it now this way and now that, grouped together the most unearthly images in the mind. Blowing now against the windows, and now through the door into the dilapidated hall, it required but little imagination on the part of such a sufferer as this poor woman, to feel herself exposed to it on all sides.

Tired at length with the moaning of the wind and the battling of the storm without, and weary

with the fearful thoughts that chased each other round in her brain, she tottered to her bed, and tried to forget all in that balmy rest that a good God has granted all alike. And she slept. And while sleep pressed down her weary lids, and dreams began to swim pleasantly in her brain, the storm still continued to rage.

Winter had come in earnest. There was no resistance to its approach, on any side, that night. People slunk away from the storm, and hid in their houses. They sat by blazing firesides, or gazed at heated stoves, that glared, like Polyphemus of old, from their single eye of fire all about the room. Some drew shawls, and blankets, and old quilts closer about their shoulders, chattering their teeth and rubbing their hands. Some talked of the sailors that rocked on the wave-tops that night, and pitied them. In well-lighted parlors, happy children romped over thick carpets, their little feet scarce making an impression; and laughed till bedtime with their parents. In dismal dens, with low ceilings and dim lights, human beings crouched and crowded, mingling their voices confusedly in laughter and noisy wrangling.

And all blessed their stars that the storm could not reach them. Its dismal sounds without only made them more contented within. Domestic feelings were suddenly forced into active growth, that

in milder weather would have died out altogether. All through the still hours of that night, it was blow—blow, sift—sift, drift—drift, fall—fall. The winds howled, and piped, and shrieked, and moaned. They raved like overjoyed fiends, as if they reveled in their fearful liberty on such a night as that.

The clocks in the town-steeple presently sounded twelve. One answered the other afar off, like wakeful goblins in the mysterious and storm-filled sky. Their jangled music, distant and dim, was broken into billows by the driving wind.

A moment after, another sound. It might have been the shriek of the maddened wind; but it was not. It pierced all the gusts of the beating storm. It rose high above all other noises. It was shriller,—sharper,—fiercer. There was one long note of terror in it, and that was all. Instantly it came again; and again. It was redoubled. It rang now from a score of throats; from a hundred throats.

The goblins in the steeples caught the sound, and at once shouted in the night-air in reply. Their noisy tongues took it up, and bellowed it out upon the wind; and the storming wind took it up, and carried it over every snow-crested roof in the city. The air above them now was alive with the broken and billowy echoes.

“FIRE! FIRE! FIRE!”

People jumped from their snug corners, and warm beds, and comfortable coverings by the fire, in alarm. They multiplied the cries yet more rapidly. Lights gleamed from chamber and gable windows. Engines rumbled like heavy artillery-carriages in the streets. Loud voices of men rose from every quarter. And above and amidst all, the brazen-throated bells still kept up their uproar. The confusion was complete.

The sudden spouting forth of the red flames told the town where the calamity had smitten them. The row of wooden buildings in the court was all on fire!

Quicker than it could be told, dense multitudes of people were crowded in and about the court. Some were sufferers, but more had come to offer relief. The inhabitants of the old buildings poured out like steady lines of bees from hives on a summer day. The space was full.

Weird and wild were the fires that burst their feeble barriers. Each house-top looked as if it might be a head of Medusa, hideous with fiery snakes and monsters. The winds blew upon them, and made circles, and curves, and parabolas of fire against the black sky. Then they caught them up, and lifted them high into the midnight gloom. And still the snow kept falling; and the men were

shouting; and women and children were shrieking; and bells were ringing fearfully.

A louder cry arose. It was from the farther, or inner end of the court.

A woman stood at an open window of the upper story, the flames leaping hungrily towards her, shrieking for help. Opposite her was a wall of living fire.

Ladders were lifted hurriedly to the window, and brave men went up. The owner of the buildings happened to be one. His noble impulses could not be restrained by fear, and he mounted to the window. But the woman now had disappeared.

—— It was Aunt Deborah!

A cloud of smoke and fire drove through the window they had reached, and beat them back. Then the changing wind lifted the whole up through the burning roof, and they looked in. The woman was lying on the floor, insensible.

They took her in their arms and bore her to the ground carefully. She was not yet dead, and they removed her to a place of safety, where restoratives would be applied.

The buildings of the old court were all consumed; and hundreds of the poor shivered in the cold winter night, for want of shelter.

The owner of the building from which the old

woman was taken, went back to see if she still lived. As he entered the room, he caught the look of her deep, dark eyes.

In another moment, he had in his arms the emaciated form of HIS MOTHER!

It was a strange Providence; but he for whom that mother had so many years wept, was thus mysteriously restored to her.

A HEART EXHUMED.

A STRANGE and gloomy-looking building it was, that stood a little back from one of the thoroughfares, with an open space before and beside it, that reminded one much of an attempt at a court-yard. A few stunted trees stood about the area, making almost abortive efforts at producing foliage, and flinging down upon the smooth and hard-worn ground the most meagre patches of shadow conceivable. A lazaar-house itself could not have been more dismal and deserted. Living beings were rarely seen walking in the yard during the day, and no noises echoed among the dreary arches at night. No lights, either, ever streamed through the high and small-paned windows, to illumine even ever so faintly the thick darkness that nightly seemed to wall in the place. Old-fashioned turrets, and peaked gables, and green little windows, abounded upon this fantastic pile; over which the curious eye might wander unsatisfied for hours.

The influences that brooded about it, were of the most mysterious character. The roar and rattle of the neighboring street only made the silence of the place the more intense. It seemed even filled with voices, though itself so very still. Some wonderful hallucination existed there; as if two worlds were mysteriously united in one, yet each a separate existence.

On a biting night in December, a gaunt and spectre-like being noiselessly crossed the area from the direction of the street, and flitted from the vision, disappearing in one of the many dark recesses that slept about the building. He wore a loose and flowing garment around his person, that swayed and flapped with the blast of each breath of the storming wind, revealing a pair of lean and crooked legs, and compelling him to bend far down to resist with success the onset of the storm.

A heavy sleet was falling at the time, rattling like volleys of small shot against the dreary windows. Lights from distant buildings faintly shone upon the roofs and turrets of this, revealing all its forbidding proportions, and creating impressions of the most dismal character imaginable. The being alluded to, stole across the unfrequented yard, and was immediately lost in the gloom. He reached a low doorway, and passed in. The old and crazy stairs creaked beneath his pressure, while he

glared wildly in every direction to know what meant the shrieks, and howls, and groans, at the loosened casements.

Almost at the dismal attic, where he could distinctly hear the peltings of the storm upon the weather-worn roof, he finally found the place of his secretion. It was a small room, with a remarkably low ceiling, and but two windows. Stained and tattered curtains of checkered material hung before them; and above them, in a style of arabesque, dangled ragged webs from the busy looms of spiders. The apartment was cold; and the first thing he proceeded to do, on entering, was to replenish the fire. This labor he succeeded finally in accomplishing; but it was after much rubbing together of his smooth and skinny hands. The noise produced by this process was much like that made by the attrition of shingles. He threw aside his odd-looking cloak, as the coals began to snap and kindle, and drew close to the fire. An old chest had been previously pulled out from beneath the bed; and, producing a large key from his pocket, he proceeded to unlock it with the same.

The chest was filled with bags of money. With his shriveled hands, he drew them out one by one, carefully untying the strings about their necks. Silver and gold lay promiscuously heaped together. How strangely those glittering pieces looked in his

hands! How the glitter seemed to mock him, and to wreck his hopes! What a hollow, dull, and heartless sound there was in the clink of the coin! What a heavy weight seemed each individual piece upon his hand, as it had the sorrows of a score of souls all centered in itself! And this was the old man's happiness,—his *only* happiness. He sat before his fire till a very late hour in the night; counting,—and clinking the coins together,—and counting. The fire finally grew dull, and went slowly down. His limbs began to shake and knock together, for the cold. The tallow-stump suddenly melted; run into its candlestick cup; and the light went out at length altogether. The miser was in the darkness.

Of all other places, none could have been imagined that, for dreariness, would equal this. And the storming of the winter sleet, and the beating, and driving, and surging, of the midnight wind, lent an additional gloom to the place, that no description could properly portray. Just as the light left him, and the darkness walled him in, the wind set up a wilder howl at the windows; rattling more fiercely the casements; and shrieking and crying, as if in dire distress. Before he moved a hand towards relighting his candle, the miser slightly averted his head to listen. A cold tremor ran over him. He shook in every limb. He turned his

head aside, and listened again. This time he started out of his chair. Leaping quite into the middle of the room, he stood there for some time as motionless as a statue.

Again came the gust,—the beating of the sleet,—and that startling howl. The little old man seized his hat and cloak, and rushed out into the hall. The echoes of his tread resounded among the dark passages and gloomy entries, and finally followed him out at the door. Beyond this point his step was noiseless; for the falling of the sleet, and the driving of the wind, both drowned the sound of his coming in their overwhelming roar. The man was in an uncontrollable frenzy. Something he had heard above the noise of the wind,—some voice he fancied he had caught in the wind itself, pierced his ears, and struck terror to his soul. On—on. The storm was nothing to him. There was nothing fearful in the freezing, icy sleet, that cut his fleshless face. The darkness of the night was as the broad light of noonday. He heard nothing,—saw nothing,—thought of nothing,—save that fearful voice. Only the memory of that froze the blood in his veins. What it was, he knew not. It was something he could not describe. Its strange and fearful power, was all he could feel.

He went dashing through the desolate yard, and plunging into the gloomiest lanes and alleys. There

was a weird influence upon him, like the clutch of a spectre's skinny hand; compelling him to shun the lighted streets, and to seek the darkest and narrowest passages. It might have been the bad angel of his heart. It might, too, have been the spirit of the evil one himself!

He had threaded already several such forbidding avenues, passing places, in his swift route, where squalor and wretchedness joined hand in hand with beastliness and crime, when his course was suddenly arrested by the hand of a person who stalked, ghost-like, out from a darkened doorway. It was a female.

"What! Ho! Let me pass!" exclaimed he, in an alarmed voice.

"No, no! For the love of God, no!" cried the stranger.

How that tone thrilled him! How it drove that same fearful tremor through all his limbs! It sounded like the voice he had heard in the old pile from which he had just fled. It *was* the same, he said to himself at once. Just as that voice rose above the shrieks and howling of the wind, so did this voice rise in his ears.

"No,—let me pass! Let me pass!" he more than half begged again.

"But for a moment! Only for a moment, I beseech you!" returned the female.

This time she spoke in tenderer accents. Her syllables were low and subdued. They smote the heart, obdurate and flinty as it was, of the little miser. He stooped down a trifle, and tried to read the expression of her eyes; but the darkness was too deep. There was a new and strange influence upon him, and he was as if bound hand and foot. He had no power of his own to move a step. He was as one without a will.

"What will you with me?" he asked of his companion; and just at the moment a raw gust slapped cruelly in his face.

"Come with me!" pleaded the female, in reply. Her voice had suddenly become faint from its passionateness. She could scarcely articulate. Yet each syllable, faint and low as it was, froze the blood in the miser's veins. She turned,—still holding on by his arm,—and led the way back through the darkened doorway. He followed closely on. They ascended one—two—three—four flights of wooden stairs, well worn by human feet, with insufficient railings, and unsteady motions. Even the miser half feared for himself at every step, lest he might have foolishly betrayed himself into some terrible danger. For the first time, he paused to ask himself what he was doing.

"Come! I *beg* you *come*!" again urged the frenzied woman; and the passionate words moved him.

They reached a low apartment in the garret. The woman seized the door, and opened it in an instant. Still holding on fiercely by his arm, she both urged and dragged him in. A dull and sickly light was trying to burn in a corner. There was an open fire-place; but no blaze was dancing up the throat of the chimney. The sticks had long ago burned out; and white and gray ashes were piled up together, apparently for a long slumber. No bright fire-dogs, ruddy with the flames. No steaming kettles, pointing their noses to loaded tables. No delightful and appetite-provoking aromas, sailing in clouds through the room from heaped dishes of meats, or vegetables, or soups. The floor was without covering, and looked as cold as the pavement they had just left. There was not even a chair in the room; nor a bedstead. A bunch of straw was thrown down in a distant corner, and upon it was spread a ragged coverlid. By the side of it stood an old chest. The woman hurried to the bedside, drawing the miser after her. The faint light flung a lurid glare over the place, scarcely sufficing to reveal the object that lay extended there.

"See!" hissed the frenzied female, through her teeth, while she pointed to the bed upon the floor.

"Starving!" said she; and her eyes glared strangely with the word.

The miser started back involuntarily. Even *he* could not behold that sight without emotion.

"Save him! For the love of God, save my child!" she shrieked again.

— Just at that moment a gust of wind drove howling down the open throat of the chimney, driving out the ashes far into the room. The shriek of the wind was louder even than the cry of the agonized woman's voice. Yet each seemed only to say, in fearfully earnest syllables:

"Save my child!"

The sleeper awoke with the cry. Tossing his arms about restlessly, he called on his mother.

"I am here, Tommy," replied she; and instantly stooped down and kissed his forehead.

The light flamed up, and the man saw full well *how* pale that childish forehead was. The boy could not have been more than four years of age. As he threw his arms and hands about, he betrayed the fearful want of flesh. He seemed nothing but bones and skin. His forehead was beautifully shaped,—full, broad, and high. It slept now in a dense bed of dark chestnut locks, and looked whiter than marble. His eyes were a dark blue, large, and expressive. They seemed filled with untold dreams. His cheeks, though much sunken from want and suffering, were yet full enough to betray their remarkable whiteness. Nothing could

be thought of, whiter than they. A half smile, half complaint, curled his finely cut lips; as if he *would* be happy, but *could* not. How could happiness come to his squalid bedside, through an array of such misery and wretchedness!

Not seeming to heed the presence of a stranger, he addressed his mother, still tossing his arms above his head. So low and liquid a voice sounded like nothing else that was human. The miser was wrought upon, as by some magic power. He listened with speechless emotions.

"O, mother!" very faintly said the child, "will you go with me, too?"

"Go where, child? Where does my little boy mean?" she inquired, bending still farther over him, to catch his whispered syllables.

"I want you to go, too, mother," persisted the boy.

"But *where* shall mother go? Where does Tommy mean?" she asked him again, holding her ear still farther down.

"Mother," said he, "I am going to die. Shall I have to be buried up in the ground? Will you not let me be buried in my little bed, and lie here just as I always do? Say, mother; will you not come, and die, and be buried here with me, too?"

The mother could not speak. Her heart was too full for utterance.

"I'm dying, mother," said the boy; "I *know* I'm dying."

"You're *starving!*" she cried. "O, sir! Save him! Save my child!"

How strangely sounded that voice again in the miser's ears! He looked full as excitedly upon the woman, as upon the child. The fearful shriek that rose above the wind, still lingered in the cells of his brain. He grew blind and dizzy; and as he tried to move, he staggered.

"Bread! Only a *crumb* of bread! My child is starving!" she cried again, in her agony.

"Woman!" fiercely replied the miser, grasping her by her thin wrist.

"O, mother! Dear mother!" faintly articulated the child. "I am dying! Come with me, mother!"

"Tommy! *Tommy!*" she called at the top of her voice. "Do not tell me so! You will drive me mad! You are *not* dying! *Tommy!*"

"Will *you* go, too, mother?" his feeble voice spoke, even more faintly.

She put both hands to her head, and her chest heaved convulsively with sobs. Low and agonizing groans broke from her lips, as if her poor, sad heart was rending itself in pieces.

"I *will* not!" fiercely exclaimed the miser, shaking her.

She looked up at him, through her blinding

tears; but only for a moment. Her face was the true index of the feelings that lacerated her heart.

"Woman!" said Caleb again, "why did you bring me here? Why should I be made to see this deep misery? O, that such wretchedness is in the world!"

"Only save my child—my darling Tommy!" she cried again.

"I cannot. What can I do? Why could I not have been spared this sight? Woman, you haunt me! Your very voice terrifies me! Why should I be here? No—let me go! let me go!"

"And my child ——"

"But what can I do? My heart bleeds enough, already!"

"Food! Warmth! O, save little Tommy!"

The miser's eye flamed suddenly up, like a newly kindled fire. Dropping the hand he had held so firmly, he gave another glare around the room, and rushed out. The woman was too much blinded with sorrow, to heed what was going on around her; save only that her child was suffering. She bowed down her head to his, and laid her cheek against his cold cheek. *How cold!* The child clasped her frail neck with his fleshless arms, as if he would not let her go again. And his eyes rolled strangely and wildly in their sockets, while he gasped as for more air.

"I will die, too, Tommy!" said she, and kissed him.

"O, mother, if you *will* come with me! I'm afraid to die alone!"

"I *will* go, dear Tommy! I *will* go! Kiss me, my child. Kiss your poor mother, again. She cannot live; and be bereaved!"

His pale lips moved to impress the affectionate kiss she craved; but they were nearly lifeless. There was not a stain of the rich, red blood upon them. Only a curved white line. It appeared as if the mother could never raise her head again. One would have thought her dying, as she had wished to die, with her child.

It was a period of dreadful suspense. The light had well nigh gone out, and gaunt and misshapen figures lay and grappled along the wall, like frightful spectres that had come to witness the last scene. Anon the wind howled again, and stirred the ashes fiercely. And then the icy sleet drove impetuously against the rattling window, driving a yet colder chill to the heart of the lone widow. Only sobs and sighs. There was a low, faint prayer, too. It came from the lips of the mother. She could scarcely articulate. The prayer was uttered in a tone a little above a whisper. The boy mingled his syllables with hers.

In the midst of this deep and silent grief, while

the dark cloud was ready to break upon two innocent and stricken hearts, the door was hastily thrown open. A man entered, holding a glaring lantern in his hand. It was the miser!

"Here! Be quick! There aint a minute to be lost!" shouted he to the person who followed close behind.

They entered the room and pushed rapidly to the bedside.

"Heavens!" exclaimed the miser, "*they are dead!*"

Mother and child were lying closely enfolded in each other's embrace. They indeed seemed to be dead. The miser stooped down and seized the woman by the shoulder, calling loudly upon her. She lifted her head languidly, and gazed upon the strangers. Her sight was so dim, it seemed to have left her altogether. She was fast yielding to the power of the death-stupor, and would soon be gone. Little Tommy's eyes were closed; but he still breathed. The miser made violent gestures to his companion. The latter set down the basket he carried, and opened it. In a moment, a volume of steam rose to his head, enveloping it in a cloud, and sending its fragrance all through the room. He knelt down by the meagre bed, and while the miser held her form, administered the steaming broth. She drank it off instinctively, scarce know-

ing why. It revived her. Then they carried a taste of it to the lips of the child, and forced it down his throat. The warm nourishment found its way through his emaciated system at once, and he called out, faintly :

“Mother!”

—— They were left together again,—the miser and the starving family. The man had gone out for more comforts for the sufferers. The miser, wrought upon by the desperation of his feelings, had given him all license respecting the provision he should make for them.

—— “If I could only see through *this* trouble!” exclaimed the poor woman.

“What next?” asked Caleb Mudge. “What do you fear next?”

“Starvation! What can I do for my poor child?”

“You shall not suffer!” exclaimed he, his heart rising in his throat. “I have money,—it is yours! Your boy shall live!”

“But I can never repay you this,” she urged, her eyes betraying her gratitude.

“Say no more. Only trust to me. I will see that you do not go through another such harrowing trial!”

—— The miser’s heart had become suddenly renewed. So strange a sight had moved him, first

with fear, and then with deepest pity. The latter had possession of him now.

—— “But whom am I to thank for all this?” asked the woman, turning her large eyes upon him. “Whom am I to call my preserver? Let me not, at least, forget to be grateful!”

“You do not know Caleb Mudge,” said he. “I am he.”

—— She looked wildly about her,—uttered a strange voice,—and staggered, and fell back upon the bed.

Caleb Mudge was *her brother*!

Why should I dwell longer upon a scene I cannot describe?

with the same will and spirit. The
first part of the journey was
very pleasant. I was
accompanied by a very
kind and attentive
driver and I was very
comfortable. The
scenery was very
beautiful and the
weather was very
pleasant.

The second part of the journey was
very pleasant. I was
accompanied by a very
kind and attentive
driver and I was very
comfortable. The
scenery was very
beautiful and the
weather was very
pleasant.

The third part of the journey was
very pleasant. I was
accompanied by a very
kind and attentive
driver and I was very
comfortable. The
scenery was very
beautiful and the
weather was very
pleasant.

The fourth part of the journey was
very pleasant. I was
accompanied by a very
kind and attentive
driver and I was very
comfortable. The
scenery was very
beautiful and the
weather was very
pleasant.

The fifth part of the journey was
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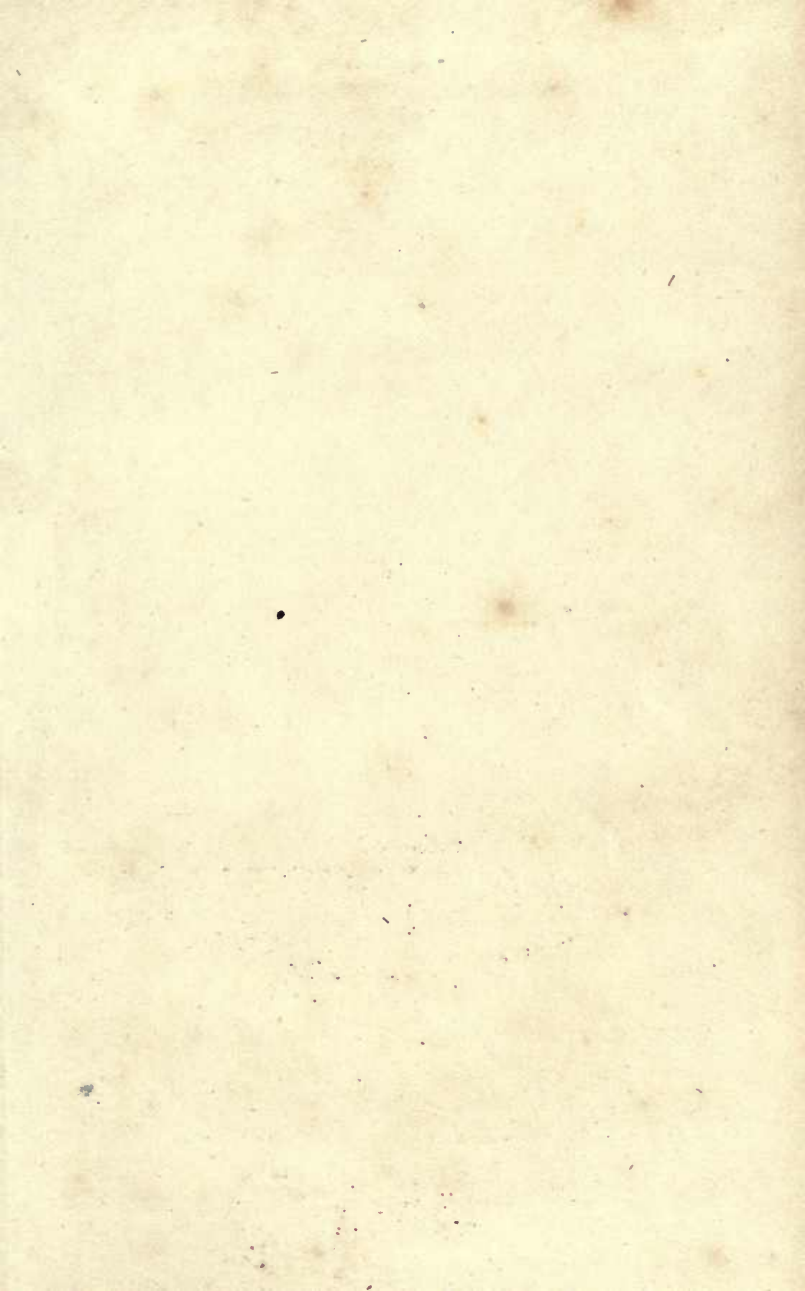
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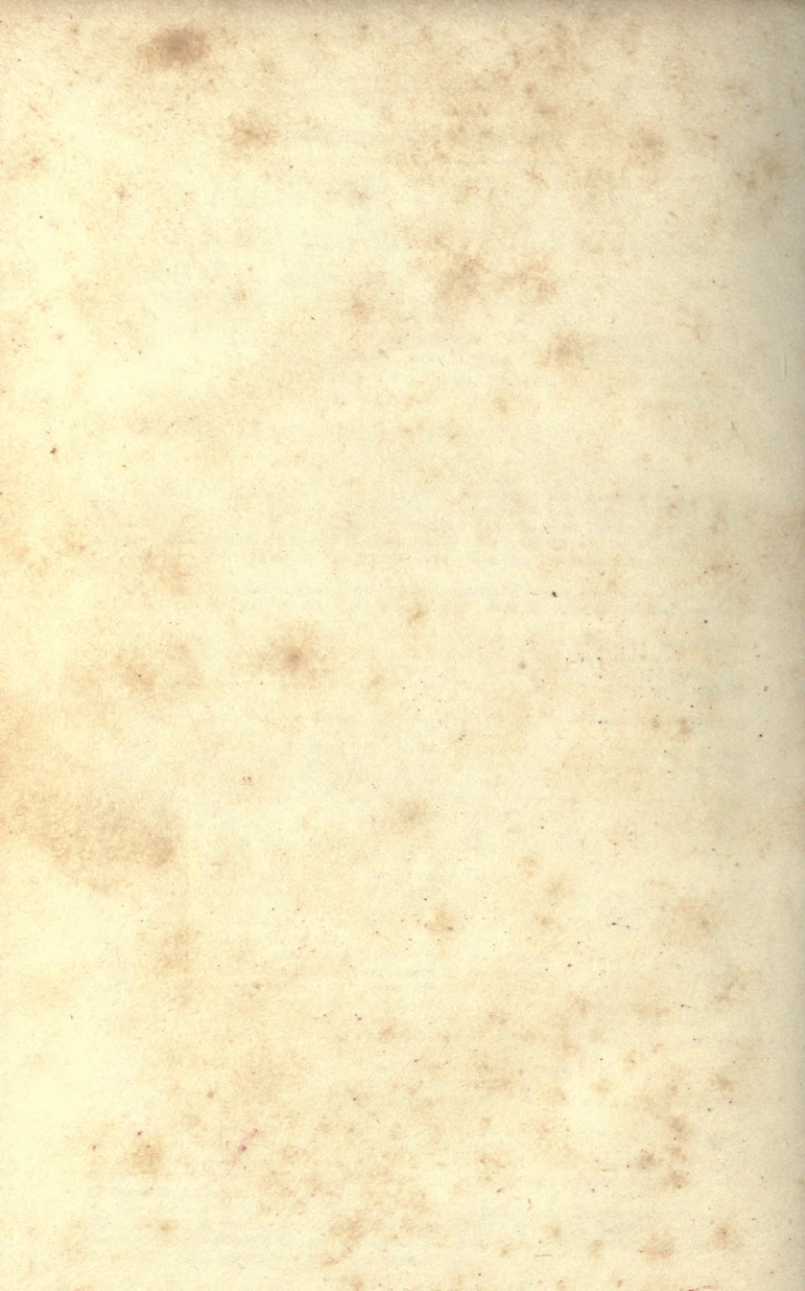
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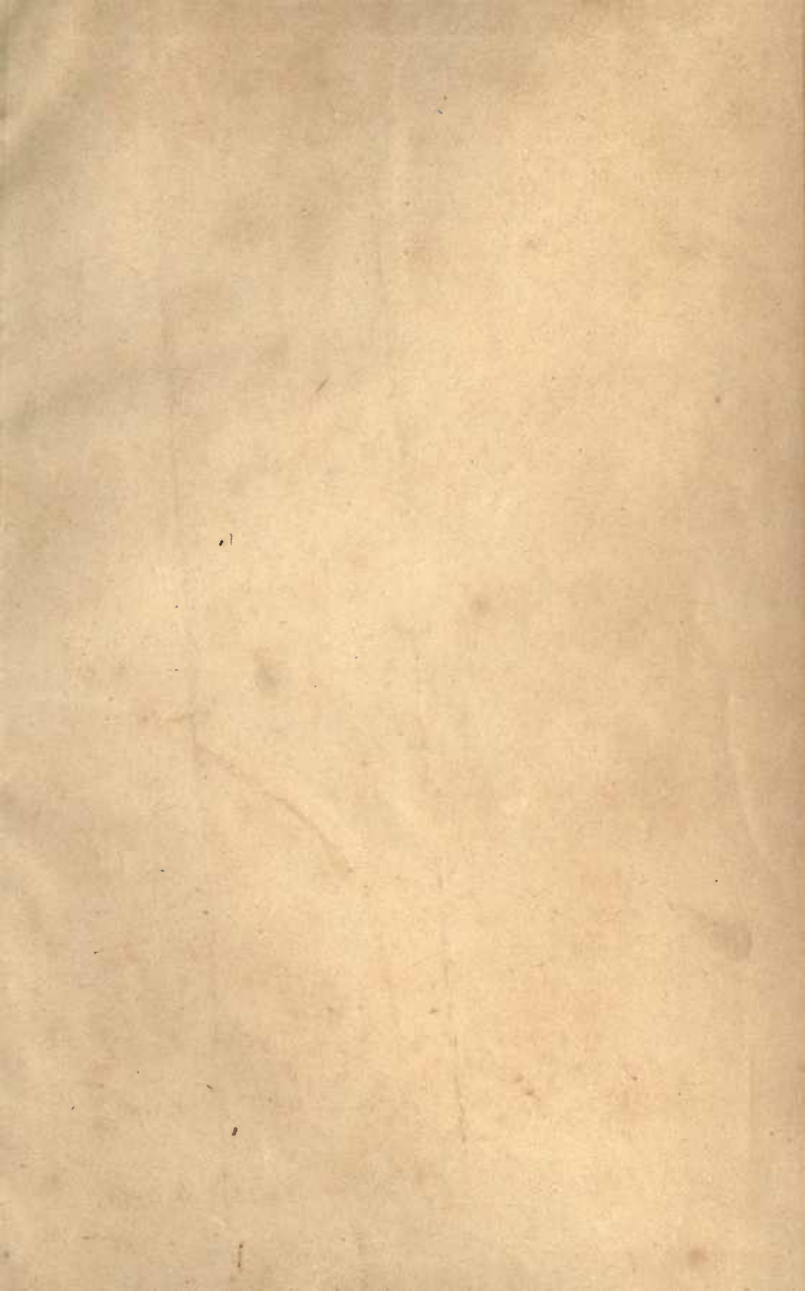
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